Tafsir of Suratul Fatihah

Compiled by Abu Rumaysah

Introduction

This commentary is a compilation gathered from a number of commentaries written. These being:

- Tafseer at-Tabaree
- Tafseer al-Qurtubi [Jaami lil Ahkaam al-Qur'an]
- Tafseer ibn Katheer
- Tafseer ash-Shawkanee [Fath al-Qadeer]
- Tafseer as-Sa`dee [Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahman]
- Tafseer ash-Shanqeetee [Adwaa al-Bayaan fee Eedaah al-Qur'an bil Qur'an].

In compiling this article I have endeavored to adhere to the following method:

Where all or the majority of the above commentators agreed on a particular point, I just mentioned the point and did not mention from whom I took the point.

Where all or the majority of the above commentators agreed on a point, but some mentioned additional information related to it, again I just merely quoted the information without mentioning which book it was taken from.

Where the commentators differed, I tried to avoid mentioning the issue altogether unless absolutely necessary in which case I either mentioned all of the different opinions, or the name of the commentator from whom I took the opinion.

Where I mentioned a commentary that only a minority of the above mentioned, but did not contradict anything that the rest mentioned I ascribed this opinion back to its proponent.

I have quoted from a number of books external to the above six, especially the works of Ibn al-Qayyim, in every such case I have fully referenced the quotes.

Most of the tafseer books do not provide authenticating or disparaging remarks concerning the hadeeth they quote. I have endeavored to provide comments to each hadeeth quoted mainly drawing from the various works of al-Albaanee.

I ask Allah that He count this effort amongst the scales of my good works and forgive me for any errors contained therein.

Its Name

It is named al-Fatihah, the Opening - because it opens the Book and by it the recitation in prayer commences.

It is also named Ummul Qur'an, the Mother of the Qur'an, and Ummul Kitaab, the Mother of the Book, according to the opinion of the majority. This was mentioned by Anas, however al-Hasan and ibn Seereen disliked this appellation reasoning that this was the most fitting description for the Preserved Tablet. Al-Hasan also said that the unequivocal verses of the Qur'an comprised the Mother of the Book. However, it is established in at-Tirmidhee from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him)who said,

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, *'[the chapter commencing with]* **"all praises and thanks are due to Allah the Lord of the Universe"** *is the Mother of the Qur'an, the Mother of the Book, the Seven Oft Repeated Verses and the Great Qur'an.'* [i.e. Ummul Qur'an, Ummul Kitaab, Sab`ul Mathaanee and al-Qur'anul Adheem]

At-Tirmidhee declared the hadeeth to be saheeh. Al-Bukhaaree said in the beginning of the Book of Tafseer in his Saheeh,

It is named Ummul Qur'an because it is the first chapter written in the Qur'anic texts and the recitation in prayer commences with it. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 6/1 chpt. 1]]

Ibn Jareer at-Tabaree said that it was named so because the meaning of the entire Qur'an is summarized therein. The Arabs named anything that concisely summarizes something or comprises the most important part of something Umm, or Mother.

For similar reasons it is also named al-Qur'an al-Adheem, the Great Qur'an.

It is also named Sab`ul Mathaanee, the Seven Oft Repeated Verses, because they are frequently recited and indeed recited in every rak`ah of the prayer.

It is also named al-Hamd, the Praise because it contains mention of hamd just as al-Baqarah is named so because it contains mention of the cow. Some scholars also gave the reasoning that al-Hamd constitutes the heart of al-Fatihah. [As-Sindee, 'Sharh as-Sindee `alaa ibn Maajah' [no. 3790]]

It is also named as-Salaah, the Prayer due his (Peace and Blessings be upon him) saying while reporting from his Lord,

"I have divided the prayer between Myself and my servant equally. Therefore when the servant says, 'all praises and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the universe,' Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me…'." [The sources for this hadeeth shall follow in the section concerning the virtues of al-Fatihah insha`Allah]

It is named the Prayer because its recitation is a condition for the validity of the prayer.

It is also named ash-Shifaa`, the Cure, due to what ad-Daarimee reports from Abu Sa`eed (May Allah be pleased with him)from the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him),

The Opening of the Book is a cure to every poison. [Ibn Katheer referred this hadeeth to ad-Daarimee from the report of Abu Sa`eed, however it is present there [2/445] as the mursal hadeeth of Abdul-Malik bin Umayr. As for the hadeeth of Abu Sa`eed then Shaykh al-Albaanee referred it in 'Da`eef al-Jaami as-Sagheer' to Sa`eed bin Mansoor and al-Bayhaqee in 'ash-Shu`ab.' He also referred it to Abu ash-Shaykh from the hadeeth of Abu Sa`eed as well as Abu Hurayrah and ruled the hadeeth to be mawdoo`. Refer to Muqbil bin Haadee, 'Takhreej `alaa Tafseer ibn Katheer' [1/21] Translators note: By this one can see the error of its being declared saheeh in the English translation to ibn Katheer [pg. 9]]

It is also named ar-Ruqya, the Spiritual Cure due to the hadeeth of Abu Sa`eed (May Allah be pleased with him)reported in Saheeh Bukhaaree that after he had recited it to cure a person who had been bitten by a scorpion, the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said to him,

And what made you to know that it was a ruqya? [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 3/264 no. 476]]

Ash-Sha`bee reports from ibn Abbaas that he named it Asaasul Qur'an, the Foundation of the Qur'an, and that he said, *"the foundation of al-Fatihah is,* **'with the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.'** *"*

Sufyaan bin Uyaynah named it al-Waaqiyah, the Protector.

Yahyaa bin Abu Katheer named it al-Kaafiyah, the Sufficient, because it suffices from everything other than it but anything else does not suffice it, as occurs in the mursal hadeeth,

The Mother of the Book suffices for other than it but nothing else suffices it. [Reported by ad-Daaruqutnee [1/322].

As-Suyutee, may Allah have mercy upon him, referred it to ad-Daaruqutnee and al-Haakim. Its chain of narration contains Muhammad bin Khallaad about whom adh-Dhahabee said in 'al-Meezaan': 'it is not known who he is…. He was alone in reporting the hadeeth of Ubaadah bin as-Saamit from the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him), "The Mother of the Book suffices for other than it but nothing else suffices it." He reported it from Ash-hab; from ibn Uyaynah; from az-Zuhree; from Mahmood bin ar-Rabee`; from Ubaadah. Ad-Daaruqutnee said: it was singularly reported from ibn Khallaad, however the preserved [hadeeth] from az-Zuhree with this chain of narration is, "a prayer is not valid in which the Mother of the Book is not recited."'

Sa'eed bin Yunus said [about him]: he reports rejected things, he is from Iskandria and his kunya is Abu Abdullaah. Refer to Muqbil bin Haadee, 'Takhreej `alaa Tafseer ibn Katheer' [1/21-22]]

It is also named Suratus Salaah, the Chapter of the Prayer, and al-Kanz, the Treasure, as mentioned by az-Zamaksharee in 'Kashshaaf.'

Its Revelation

It was revealed in Mecca as stated by ibn Abbaas, Qataadah and Abu al-Aaliyah.

It is also postulated that it was revealed in Madeenah as stated by Abu Hurayrah, Mujaahid, `Ataa bin Yasaar and az-Zuhree. It is also said that it was revealed on two separate occasions – once in Mecca and once in Madeenah. However the first opinion is the most likely due to His saying,

"We have sent to you the Seven Oft Repeated Verses." [Al-Hijr (15): 87]

This verse was revealed in Mecca by agreement of the exegetes.

Abu al-Layth as-Samarqandee relates that half of it was revealed in Mecca and the remaining half in Madeenah as quoted from him by al-Qurtobee but this is an extremely strange position.

It is said that this chapter was the first thing revealed of the Qur'an as mentioned in the hadeeth reported by al-Bayhaqee in 'Dalaa`il an-Nubuwwa.' Al-Baaqillaanee quoted this as one of three opinions. It is also said that the first revelation comprised the verses of Surah al-Muddaththir but the correct opinion is that the first revelation consisted of the beginning verses of Surah al-`Alaq.

Its Composition

It consists of seven verses and there is no difference concerning this.

'Amr bin Ubaid said that it consists of eight verses and Husayn al-Ju`afee said that it consists of six verses but both of these opinions are irregular and rejected.

They have differed concerning the statement **'with the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.'** The majority of the reciters of Kufa postulate that it comprises an independent verse of al-Fatihah and this is also the opinion of a group of the Sahaabah, Taabi`een and a large group of the later scholars. However the reciters and jurists of Madeenah regard it to be part of a verse, and not an independent verse, or not a verse at all.

Those who postulate that it is not a verse of al-Fatihah state that the seventh verse commences with the words, **"not the path of those who have earned [Your] Anger…"**

They said, "Al-Fatihah consists of twenty-five words and one hundred and thirteen letters."

The Virtues of Surah al-Fatihah

There are a number of ahaadeeth explaining to us the great virtue of this chapter:

1. Muslim reports from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Allah, the Glorious and Exalted said, "I have divided the prayer between Myself and my servant equally and My servant shall be granted what he asked for." Therefore when the servant says, **'all praises and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the universe'**, Allah says, 'My servant has praised Me.' When he says, **'the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful,'** Allah says, 'My servant has extolled Me.' When he says, **'Master of the Day of Judgement,'** Allah says, 'My servant has glorified Me.' When he says, **'You Alone we worship and Your aid Alone do we seek,'** Allah says, 'this is between Me and My servant and My servant shall have what he requested.' When he says, **'guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those whom You have favored, not of those who have incurred [Your] wrath, neither of those who have gone astray,'** Allah says, 'this is for My servant and My servant shall have what he asked for.' [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/215 no. 775]]

2. At-Tirmidhee reports from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) who said that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

[The chapter commencing with], **"all praises and thanks are due to Allah the Lord of the Universe"** is the Mother of the Qur'an, the Mother of the Book, the Seven Oft Repeated Verses and the Great Qur'an. [i.e. Ummul Qur'an, Ummul Kitaab, Sab`ul Mathaanee and al-Qur'anul Adheem. Reported by at-Tirmidhee [no. 3344] and it is saheeh as stated by al-Albaanee in 'Saheeh Sunan at-Tirmidhee' [no. 2498].]

3. Ahmad reports from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) who said,

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) named Ubayy bin Ka`b while he was praying in the Mosque saying, "O Ubayy!" Ubayy turned his head towards him but did not reply. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) named him again saying, "O Ubayy!" So Ubayy shortened his prayer and turned towards the Prophet and said, "as salaam u alaikum O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) replied, "wa alaikum as-salaam. What prevented you from replying to me when I named you?" Ubayy said, "O Messenger of Allah I was praying!" He said, "does Allah not say,

'Respond to Allah and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.' [Al-Anfaal (8): 24]?

Ubayy replied, "Yes O Messenger of Allah! I will not do this again." The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) asked, "would you like me to teach you a Surah the likes of which is not to be found in the Torah, Injeel, Zaboor or the [rest of the] Qur'an?" He said, "yes O Messenger of Allah." The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, "I hope that I will not leave this door until you know it."

Ubayy said, "then he took hold of my hand and talked to me while I slowed down fearing that we may reach the door before he finished talking. When we did reach it I asked him, 'what is the Surah you promised me, O Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'what is the Surah you recite in prayer?' So I recited the Mother of the Qur'an upon which he said, 'by the One in Whose Hand is my soul, Allah has not revealed the likes of it in the Torah, Injeel, Zaboor or the [rest of the] Qur'an. It is the Seven Oft-Repeated verses.'" [Ahmad [5/114], ibn Khuzaymah [1/252 no. 500] and others. Its isnaad was declared saheeh by Mustafaa al-A`dhamee in his takhreej to ibn Khuzaymah]

4. Ahmad reports from Abu Sa`d ibn al-Mu`allaa (May Allah be pleased with him) who said,

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) named while I was praying in the Mosque but I did not respond until I had completed the prayer. I went to him and he asked, "what prevented you from coming to me [earlier]?" I replied, "I was praying O Messenger of Allah." He said, "does Allah not say,

'Respond to Allah and the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life.' [Al-Anfaal (8): 24]?

He then said, "I will teach a Surah which is the greatest Surah in the Qur'an before you leave the Mosque." Then he grasped hold of my hand and when he intended to leave [the Mosque], I asked him, "did you not say that you would teach me a Surah which is the greatest Surah in the Qur'an?" He replied, "yes. It is [the Surah commencing with], **'All praise and thanks are due to Allah.'** It is the Seven Oft-Repeated verses and the Great Qur'an that has been given to me." [Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 6/1 no.1], Ahmad [3/450] and the wording is his]

5. Muslim reports from ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) who said,

While the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) was sitting with Jibreel he heard a creaking sound above him. Jibreel looked up and said, "this is [the sound of] a gate that has been opened in heaven today and has never been previously opened." Then an Angel descended through it and came

to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) and said, “rejoice in the good news of two lights that have been given to you such as no prophet before you has been given. [They are] Surah al-Fatihah and the concluding [two] verses of Surah al-Baqarah. You will never recite a word from them without being given the blessings they contain.” [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 2/586 no. 1759]]

This hadeeth has led some scholars to suggest that Jibreel did not convey the revelation of Surah al-Fatihah and the last two verses of al-Baqarah, rather it was the Angel mentioned in this hadeeth. However the correct opinion is that Jibreel did indeed convey the revelation of these verses as he was enjoined by Allah to convey the entire Qur'an to the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him). The Angel that descended as mentioned in this hadeeth descended only to convey the reward of these verses.

The Ruling of Reciting al-Fatihah in Prayer

The opinion of the majority of the scholars, amongst them Maalik, ash-Shaafi`ee and Ahmad, is that it is obligatory to recite al-Fatihah in the prayer and that the prayer is not valid without it. Their opinion is based upon many proofs; from amongst them the sayings of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him),

“There is no prayer for the one who does not recite the Opening of the Book.” [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 1/404 no. 723], Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/214 no. 771]]

“Whosoever performs a prayer in which he does not recite the Mother of the Book then it is deficient, it is deficient, it is deficient, it is incomplete” [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/215 no. 775]]

The prayer is not valid in which the Mother of the Qur'an is not recited. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/215 no. 772]]

However according to Abu Haneefah, those of his companions who agreed with him, al-Awza`ee and ath-Thawree, it is not obligatory to recite al-Fatihah, rather any portion of the Qur'an would be sufficient. They based this upon the saying of Allah,

“And recite what is easy [for you] from the Qur'an.” [Al-Muzzammil (73): 20]

And the saying of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) to the man who prayed badly,

When you stand for pray, say the takbeer and then recite what is easy for you from the Qur'an. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 1/404 no. 724]]

On top of this, according to ash-Shaafi`ee and a group of the People of Knowledge it is obligatory to recite al-Fatihah in every rak`ah of the prayer. However, another group were of the opinion that it is sufficient to recite it in the majority of the rak`ahs and yet another group, from amongst them al-Hasan and the majority of the scholars of Basrah, were of the opinion that it is sufficient just to recite it in one rak`ah. This latter group took to the literal sense of the hadeeth,

There is no prayer for the one who does not recite the Opening of the Book

In the case where one is a follower in a congregational prayer then the scholars fell into three opinions with regards to the follower's reciting al-Fatihah:

1. It is obligatory upon him to recite it in all prayers.
2. It is upon him not to recite it in all prayers.
3. He should recite it in those prayers in which the recitation is silent, but not in those prayers in which the recitation is loud.

The point here is not to discuss which is the strongest opinion but to show that al-Fatihah has specific rulings to it that are not shared by any other chapter of the Qur'an. Allah Knows best.

The Ruling of Isti`aadhah (Seeking Refuge)

Allah says,

"Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good and turn away from the foolish. And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Shaytaan then seek refuge with Allah. Indeed He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." [Al-A`raaf (7): 199-200]

"Repel evil by means of what is best. We are best Acquainted with the things that they utter. And say, 'My Lord! I seek refuge with you from the whisperings of the devils and I seek refuge with you my Lord lest they come near me.'" [Al-Mu`minoon (23): 96-98]

"Repel [evil] with that which is better then indeed the one, between whom and you there was enmity, [will become] as though he was a devoted friend. But none is granted [this quality] except those who are patient and none is granted it save one who possesses a great portion [of high moral character]. And if an evil suggestion comes to you from Shaytaan then seek refuge with Allah. Indeed He is All-Hearing, All-Knowing." [Fussilaat (41): 34-46]

These verses command the servant of Allah to seek refuge with Him from the accursed Shaytaan due to the severe enmity he displays towards mankind and displayed towards their father, Aadam (AS). Allah says,

"O Children of Adam! Let not Shaytaan deceive you, as he removed your parents out of Paradise." [Al-A`raaf (7): 27]

Ibn al-Jawzee said,

Servants of Allah! Contemplate on the removal of your father, Adam from Paradise, the home of security and his descent to the home of disgrace and abasement. The reason for this was none other than the accursed Shaytaan. Your Master has prohibited you from obeying him and ordered you to disobey him. Indeed in his obedience lies the Displeasure of ar-Rahmaan and disobeying him necessitates residing in Paradise and the descent of Pleasure.

Allah, Glorified and Exalted, said, **"Shaytaan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality."** [Al-Baqarah (2): 268]

So whosoever obeys him, he forsakes him and diverts him from the guidance and opens in his heart the doors to misguidance and ignominy. [Ibn al-Jawzee, 'Bustaan al-Waa`idheen' [pg. 27]]

Allah further explains to us the extreme enmity of Shaytaan with His words,

"Indeed Shaytaan is an open enemy to you so take him as an enemy. He invites his followers only that they may become the denizens of the blazing Fire." [Faatir (35): 6]

"Will you then take him and his offspring as friends and protectors besides Him while they are open enemies to you? Wretched it is as an exchange for the wrong-doers." [Al-Kahf (18): 50]

Indeed Shaytaan took an oath saying,

"By Your Might! I will surely misguide them all, except Your chosen slaves amongst them." [Saad (38): 82-83]

It is for this reason that we have been encouraged to seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytaan. With regards to reciting the Qur'an, Allah says,

"When you wish to read [lit: have read] the Qur'an then seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytaan. Indeed he has no power over those who believe and put their trust only in their Lord. His power is only over those who follow him and join partners with Him." [An-Nahl (16): 99-100]

A group of the reciters and scholars, from amongst them Hamza, ibn Seereen, Ibrahim an-Nakha`ee and Dawood adh-Dhaahiree, were of the opinion that one seeks refuge after the completion of recitation, taking to the literal sense of this verse. They also stated that the reason for doing so would be to repress self-astonishment at the completion of an action of worship.

A second opinion voiced is that one seeks refuge before and after ones recitation. However the famous, well-known opinion, which is the opinion of the majority is that one seeks refuge before recitation in order to safeguard oneself from the whisperings of Shaytaan. This groups understood the meaning of the verse to be, "when you wish to read the Qur'an…" in the same sense as the verse,

"When you intend to stand for prayer [lit: have stood for prayer], then wash your faces and forearms…" [Al-Maa`idah (5): 6]

Abu Dawood reports from Abu Sa`eed al-Khudree that,

When the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) stood at night [for prayer, he would commence the prayer] by saying the takbeer and then saying, "SubhaanakAllahumma wa bihamdika, wa tabarrakasmuka, wa ta`aalaa jadduka, wa laa ilaaha ghayruk." [You are glorified O Allah and praised! Your Name is Blessed; Your Majesty is Exalted and none has the right to be worshipped save You.] Then he would say, "laa ilaaha illAllah" [There is none worthy of worship save You] three times, then he would say, "Allahu Akbar" three times and then he would say, "A`oodhu billaahi as-Samee` al-Aleem min ash-Shaytaanir Rajeem – min hamzihi wa nafkhihi wa nafthihi" [I take refuge with Allah, the All-Seeing, the All-Knowing from the accursed Shaytaan: from his madness, arrogance and poetry. The hadeeth is reported by Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/198 no. 774] and others and it is in 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 701]]

Abu Dawood reports from Naafi` bin Jubair from his father who said,

I saw the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) saying when he entered into prayer, "Allahu Akbar Kabeera" [Allah is the Greatest, very great] three times, "Alhamdulillaahi Katheera" [Praise and thanks be to Allah, again and again] three times and "SubhaanAllahi Bukratan wa Aseela" [Glorified is Allah, morning and evening] three times. Then he said, "Allahumma innee A`udhubika mina ash-Shaytaan, min hamzihi wa nafkhihi wa nafathi"

[O Allah! I take refuge with You from Shaytaan – from his madness, arrogance and poetry. The hadeeth is reported by Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/196 no. 763.] and ibn Maajah [no. 807]. It has been ruled to be da`eef with this wording by Al-Albaanee in 'Da`eef Abu Dawood' [no. 160], 'Da`eef ibn Maajah' [no. 173] and 'Irwaa`' [2/54] However there is a saheeh hadeeth reported by ibn Maajah [no. 808] from ibn Mas`ud that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) used to say the above words of seeking refuge when he entered the prayer. Refer to 'Saheeh ibn Maajah' [no. 658] and 'Irwaa`' [2/55] As for the supplication then it is authentically reported in Saheeh Muslim that it was said without the repetitions by one of the Companions in prayer upon which the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, "wonderful for it [the supplication] is that the doors of heaven were opened for it."]

The majority of scholars are of the opinion of that isti`aadha is recommended and not obligatory. However it is reported fom `Ataa bin Abee Rabaah that it is obligatory to say it within the prayer and outside the prayer when one desires to recite the Book of Allah. Ar-Raazee stated that the proof for this opinion was that the verse, "seek protection with Allah" is mentioned in the imperative, that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) persisted in uttering it throughout his life and that it serves as a protective barrier from Shaytaan – therefore if an obligation can only be fulfilled by a particular means then that means also becomes an obligation.

Isti`aadha is for the recitation in prayer – this being the opinion of Abu Haneefah and Muhammad. As such it is to be said before one starts reciting al-Fatihah. Shaykh Mashur Hasan Salmaan said,

It is clear that isti`aadha is legislated in every rak`ah [of prayer]. This is due to the generality of His saying, **"When you wish to read the Qur'an then seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytaan."**

This is the most correct opinion of the Shaafi`ee school and declared to be the strongest opinion by ibn Hazm. [Mashur Hasan Salmaan, 'Al-Qawl al-Mubeen fee Akhta`i al-Musalleen' [pg. 109]. Refer also to an-Nawawee, 'al-Majmu`' [3/323]; al-Albaanee, 'Tamaam al-Minnah' [pp. 176-177]]

Al-Haafidh ibn al-Qayyim, may Allah have mercy upon him, explained the meaning of a`oodhu (I take refuge) in a beautiful way. He said,

Know that the verb `aadha and its derivatives carry the meaning of being careful and wary, guarding and fortifying, being rescued and victorious. Its essential meaning is to flee from that which you fear will harm you to that which will safeguard you from it. This is why the one you seek refuge with is named m`aadh and malja` (the source of refuge and recourse).

In the hadeeth there occurs, "when the daughter of al-Jawn entered upon the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) [after their marriage] he moved his hand [to touch her] and she said, 'I take refuge with Allah from you.' He said, 'indeed you have sought refuge with the Ma`aadh, return and rejoin your family.' " [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 7/181 no. 181, 182]]

Therefore the meaning of a`oodhu is: I take refuge, guard myself and take precaution. There are two opinions concerning the basis of this verb. The first is that it is derived from the meaning of as-satar, covering or protection, and the second is that it is derived from the meaning of luzoom al-mujaawara, firmly adhering to that which adjoins it.

As for the first opinion then the Arabs used to say with regards to a house that is in the shade of a tree - `uwwadha. Therefore when this house did `aadha with this tree by being built under its shade the Arabs named it `uwwadh. The same applies to the one who takes refuge for he seeks protection and cover from his enemy with the one he seeks refuge with.

As for the second opinion then the Arabs used to say regarding flesh that was stuck to a bone and could not be removed, `uwwadha, because of its refusal to be dislodged from the bone. The same applies to the one taking refuge for he sticks firmly to the one he is seeking refuge with and refuses to be distanced.

Both of these opinions are correct for seeking refuge includes both. The one taking refuge seeks protection with the one he is seeking refuge with and sticks firmly to him. His heart attaches itself to him and holds firm just as the child sticks close to its father when threatened by an enemy. The same applies to the one taking refuge for he flees from his enemy who desires his destruction to his Lord, throwing himself between His Hands, holding firmly to Him, sticking close to Him and resorting to Him.

Now, know that the reality of seeking refuge that is established in the heart of the believer surpasses and is beyond these descriptions, for these serve only as examples and representations. As for that which is established in the heart in its taking refuge, holding fast to and its throwing itself before its Lord, its need of Him and its submission and humility before Him, then all of this is beyond description.

In a similar vein, love of Him and fear of Him can only be described in a deficient way for they cannot truly be understood except through experiencing them. This is similar to the case of one trying to describe the pleasure of sexual intercourse to one who is impotent and feels no sexual urges. No matter how much you describe it and how many examples you give, never will he truly understand it. However if you were to describe it to one who does have these urges and has had intercourse then he will understand your descriptions completely.

If it is asked: When one is commanded to take refuge with Allah why does the form of the command carry a seen and taa`? For example in His saying,

"Seek protection (fasta`idh) with Allah from the Accursed Shaytaan." [an-Nahl (16):98]

Yet one says, 'I take refuge (a`oodhu)' and 'I took refuge (ta`awwadhtu)' without including the seen and taa`?

The reply is: the seen and taa` are grammatically used to denote a person's seeking something. Therefore when one says, 'asta`eedhu with Allah' he is saying, 'I seek refuge with Him.' When he says, 'astaghfirullaah' he is saying, 'I seek the forgiveness of Allah.'

Hence when the person says, 'I take refuge (a`oodhu) with Allah' he is actually implementing and realising what he seeks because he sought refuge and protection with Allah. There is a clear difference between actually taking refuge and seeking refuge. Therefore when the one who is seeking refuge is actually recoursing to Allah and holding firmly to Him then he says the verb that denotes this rather than saying the verb that denotes that he only seeks this.

The opposite is true for the saying, 'astaghfirullaah' (I seek the forgiveness of Allah) for in this case the person is asking Allah to forgive him. Therefore when he says, 'astaghfirullaah' he is implementing what he desires because the meaning of this statement is, 'I ask Allah that He forgive me.'

This then is the best way of seeking refuge and it was for this reason that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) used to say, "I take refuge with Allah from the Accursed Shaytaan" and, "I take refuge with Allah's perfect words" and, "I take refuge with the Might and Power of Allah" saying, 'a`oodhu' rather than 'asta`eedhu.'

Indeed this is what Allah taught him to say with His words,

"Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak" [al-Falaq (113): 1]

"Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Mankind." [an-Naas (114): 1]

Employing the word 'a`oodhu' rather than 'ast`eedhu.' [Ibn al-Qayyim, 'Badaa`i al-Fawaa`id' [1/439-441]; 'Tafseer al-Qayyim' [pp. 538-541]]

Ibn al-Jawzi said,

Know that the one who is taking refuge with Allah, the Great from the accursed Shaytaan has clung to the firm Rope of Allah. I take refuge with Allah from all sins and actions of transgression! I take refuge with Allah from misguidance and treachery! I take refuge with Allah from the Displeasure of ar-Rahmaan!

O My brother! Know that when the servant clings to the rope of the created king he is saved from the evil of the oppressors. Therefore it far more befitting and appropriate for the one who takes refuge with the Lord of the Universe from the accursed enemy, Shaytaan, that he be saved. [Ibn al-Jawzee, 'Bustaan al-Waa`idheen' [pg. 26]]

There are a number of texts showing us the virtue of isti`aadha:

1. Bukhaaree reports from Sulaymaan ibn Sarad (May Allah be pleased with him) that,

Two men abused each other in the presence of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) while we were sitting with him. One of the two abused the other while in a state of rage, his face red. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, "I know a statement that if he were to say, what he is experiencing would leave him. If only he were to say, 'I take refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaytaan.'" [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 8/87 no. 136]]

2. Ahmad reports from Abu Dharr (May Allah be pleased with him)that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

"O Abu Dharr! Take refuge with Allah from the satans from amongst men and jinn." I said, 'are their satans amongst men?' He replied, *"yes."* [Ahmad [5/178]. The hadeeth has two routes of narration both which are weak as mentioned in Muqbil bin Haadee, 'Takhreej Tafseer ibn Katheer' [1/98]]

3. Abu Dawood reports from ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

If anyone seeks refuge with [you] for the sake of Allah then grant him refuge. If any asks of you for the sake of Allah then grant his request. [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 3/1416 no. 5089]. It is saheeh. Refer to al-Albaanee, 'as-Saheehah' [no. 253]; 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 4260], 'al-Irwaa' [no. 1617]; 'Saheeh al-Jaami' [no. 6021]]

It is said that the word Shaytaan is derived from shatana which means to be distanced, and indeed Shaytaan is far removed from any good whatsoever. It is also said that the name is derived from shaata, which means to burn because he is made from fire. Others said that both meanings are correct. However, the first meaning is most correct and is proven by the language.

- The saying of the Exalted, **"With the Name of Allah, The Most Beneficent, The Most Merciful"**:

From the manners that Islam has taught us is to begin all of our actions by mentioning the Name of Allah first. The purpose behind this far-reaching and manifold:

1. It brings Allah to mind before one does the action.
2. It prevents one from doing evil actions.
3. He will attain Allah's support and succour in that action.
4. It reminds one of the purpose, the source of fulfillment of that need, the source of blessings for that action and its final destination.

Ibn al-Qayyim explained this final point further in *'al-Fawaa'id'*,

Allah says, **"there is not a single thing except that its depositories and treasures are with Us."** [Al-Hijr (15): 21]

This verse comprises a [great] treasure from the treasures [of the Qur'an], this being that nothing is sought except from the One Who possesses its depositories and treasures, the One in Whose Hands lie the keys to these treasures. Seeking [things] from anyone else is seeking something from one who does not possess them or possess any authority over them.

The saying of Allah, **"and that to your Lord is the final goal."** [An-Najm (53): 42]

Comprises an immense treasure, this being that every desired objective that is not desired for His sake and is not connected [in any form or fashion] to Him then it is temporary and soon to disappear for its final goal is not with Him. The final goal lies only with the One to Whom all matters find their conclusion, terminating at His creation, Will, Wisdom and Knowledge. Therefore He is the source of every desired matter.

Everything that is loved – if it is not loved for His sake then this love is nothing but distress and punishment. Every action that is not performed for His sake then it is wasted and severed. Every heart that does not reach Him is wretched, veiled from achieving its success and happiness.

Therefore Allah has gathered everything that could be desired from Him in His saying, **"there is not a single thing except that its depositories and treasures are with Us."** [Al-Hijr (15): 21]

And He has gathered everything that is done for His sake in His saying, **"and that to your Lord is the final goal."** [An-Najm (53): 42]

Therefore there is nothing beyond Allah that deserves to be sought and nothing finds its conclusion with other than Him.

The baa (with) is known as the baa of isti`aanah or seeking help and support, meaning that the servant is seeking the aid of Allah in the action he is about to perform.

"With the Name of Allah" meaning I start with every name that belongs to Allah, the Exalted. This is because the word 'name' is singular and in the genitive form and therefore it includes all of the Beautiful Names.

"Allah" He is the Lord and the One Who is worshipped, the One deserving of being singled out for worship due to the Perfect Godly Attributes that He is described with.

Ibn Uthaymeen (May Allah have mercy upon him) states,

This is the Name of His from which all other Names follow on from as occurs in His saying, **"Alif Laam Raa. This is a Book which We sent down to you in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness into the light by the permission of their Lord, to the Path of the All-Mighty, the one worthy of all praise: Allah, to who belongs everything that is in the heavens and the earth."** [Ibraaheem (14): 1-2]

So in this saying of Allah, the Most High, the noun which is the name of the Majestic Lord, 'Allah' is not a descriptive attribute, rather it is a word which follows as an explanation and clarification of what has preceded. [Ibn Uthaymeen, 'Explanation of the Three Fundamental Principles of Islam' [pg. 36]]

The action that the servant intends to do has been omitted in the sentence in order to generalize the statement [known as the basmAllah]. Hence no matter what the servant intends to do, the basmAllah is applicable to it. We also understand that the action is to come at the end of the sentence for two vital reasons:

1. To seek blessings by beginning with the name of Allah.
2. To express the fact that the action is only for Allah.

Therefore it is as if the servant is saying 'I seek the help of Allah with every Name of His, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful in the action I am about to do.'

There are a number of texts explaining to us the virtue of the basmAllah:

1. Imam Ahmad reports from Abu Tameemah that,

I was riding behind the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) when his mount stumbled and so I said, 'may Shaytaan perish!' Upon hearing this the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, "do not say may Shaytaan perish for when you say this Shaytaan becomes exultant and grows in stature and says, 'it was by my power that I injured him.' But when you say, 'with the Name of Allah' he becomes humiliated and grows small until he ends up the size of a fly." [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 3/1387 no. 4964], Ahmad [5/59, 365] and the wording is his. It was declared saheeh by al-Albaanee in 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 4168]. Muqbil bin Haadee said that the isnaad of Ahmad contains the narrators of the Saheeh]

2. Abu Dawood reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

There is no wudu for the one who does not [commence] by mentioning the Name of Allah. [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/26 no. 101] and it is saheeh as in 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 92]]

3. Bukhaaree reports from ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him)that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

If, when one of you wishes to go to his wife [for sexual intercourse] says, 'With the Name of Allah, O Allah! Protect us from the Shaytaan and keep the Shaytaan away from what You will provide us.' Then if it is decreed that they should have a child out of that act then the Shaytaan will never be able to harm him. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 1/105 no. 143], Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 2/731 no. 3361]]

4. Al-Khateeb reports from Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Every important matter that is not begun with, 'with the Name of Allah' is deprived of good. [As-Subkee, 'Tabaqaat ash-Shaafi`iyyah' [1/6] and others. Al-Albaanee ruled it to be da`eef jiddan in 'Irwaa' [no. 1]]

Ibn Mas`ud said,

"Whosoever wishes to the saved from the nineteen Angels over Hellfire then let him recite with the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful."

The scholars are agreed that the basmAllah comprises part of the verse of Surah an-Nahl wherein Allah says,

"She said: O eminent ones, indeed to me has been delivered a noble letter. Indeed it is from Sulaymaan and it [reads], 'with the Name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.'" [An-Naml (27): 29-30]

However the scholars have differed as to whether or not this statement comprises a verse of the Qur'an when it is found in the beginning of each Surah and they have fallen into four opinions:

1. That it is a verse of every Surah except Surah at-Tawbah.

This was the opinion of Abdullaah bin Abbaas, ibn Umar, ibn Zubair, Abu Hurayrah, `Ataa, Taawoos, Sa`eed bin Jubair, Makhool, az-Zuhree, Abdullaah bin Mubaarak, ash-Shaafi`ee, Ahmad – in one of the reports from him, Ishaaq bin Rahwayyah and Abu Ubayd al-Qaasim bin Salaam.

2. That it is not a verse of any Surah of the Qur'an at all and that it is placed at the beginning of every Surah merely to distinguish it from another.

This was the opinion of Maalik, Abu Haneefah and their companions. Abu Dawood reports from **ibn Abbaas** (May Allah be pleased with him) that

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) did not use to know the beginning and end of a Surah until 'with the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful' was revealed. [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/202 no. 787]. Ibn Katheer says that its isnaad is saheeh and it is in 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 707]]

3. That it is a verse of al-Fatihah but not of any other Surah or it is part of the first verse of every Surah.

This is another opinion reported from ash-Shaafi`ee but it is ghareeb.

4. That it is an independent verse of the Qur'an heading every Surah but not actually part of that Surah.

This is the opinion of Dawood and Ahmad in the second of the two reports from him. Abu Bakr ar-Raazee also relates this from Abu al-Hasan al-Karkhee and these two are from the greatest of the Hanafi scholars.

As regard to whether one should recite it loudly in prayer then the fiqh of this branches off from the difference mentioned above.

So those who follow the second and fourth opinions are not of the view that one recites it loudly. Indeed Maalik was of the opinion that one does not recite it at all, depending upon the literal sense of the following hadeeth and its likes,

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) used to commence his prayer by saying the takbeer and reciting, 'all praise and thanks are due to Allah.' [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/258 no. 1005] from Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her)]

As for those who follow the first opinion then they differ falling into two opinions:

1. That one recites it loudly as it is a part of al-Fatihah and therefore it should be recited in the same way as the rest of the Surah.

This is the view of a group of the Sahaabah, and a number of the scholars after them, from amongst them ash-Shaafi`ee.

Al-Haakim reports from ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) that,

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) recited, 'with the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful' loudly. [Mustadrak [1/326 no. 750], wherein he said that it was saheeh. However az-Zayla`i said in 'Nasb ar-Raayah' [1/345] that its isnaad contains Abdullaah bin `Amr bin Hisaan about who Alee bin al-Madeenee said that he used to fabricate ahaadeeth. Adh-Dhahabee mentioned the same in his 'Talkhees.']

Bukhaaree reports from Anas bin Maalik (May Allah be pleased with him) that he said in reply to one who asked him about the recitation of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him),

His recitation would be elongated, then he recited 'with the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful' elongating bismillaah, elongating ar-Rahmaan and elongating ar-Raheem. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 6/513 no. 566]]

Abu Dawood reports from Umm Salamah (May Allah be pleased with her) that she said,

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) used to cut his recitation at each verse [pausing before going on to the next. He would recite], 'with the Name of Allah, Most Beneficent, Most Merciful' [then] 'all praise and thanks are due to Allah the Lord of the Universe,' [then], 'the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful' [then], 'Master of the Day of Judgement.' [Sunan Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 3/1120 no. 3990]. Ad-Daarqutnee said that it has a saheeh isnaad and it is in 'Saheeh Abu Dawood' [no. 3379]]

2. That it is not to be recited loudly.

This is reported from the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) by Bukhaaree and Muslim, it is the view of a number of the Sahaabah, and it is established from the Four Khaleefahs. It is also the view of a group of the scholars after them from amongst them Abu Haneefah, ath-Thawree and Ahmad.

So this is a summary of the views of the scholars with regards it recitation and they are all close to each other, and all praise is due to Allah, for they are agreed that the prayer of the one who recites loudly or silently is valid.

- The saying of the Exalted, **"All Praises and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the Universe"**:

The meaning of hamd is praise and extolling. It also carries the meaning of ridaa, or pleasure and is the opposite of dhamm, or blame. Its meaning is more general and inclusive than that of shukr, or giving thanks, because it encompasses this as well as giving the meaning of praise. Similarly shukr is only expressed as a response to a favor whereas hamd is expressed both as a response to a favor as well as a spontaneous action of dhikr. It is in this respect that ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) said, "al-Hamdulillaah is the statement of every thankful [servant]."

Hence it is due to the comprehensiveness of this word that we find the Prophets showing gratitude in the Qur'an by expressing hamd. Allah commanded Nuh (Peace Be upon him) saying,

"Say: All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who saved us from an oppressive people." [Al-Mu`minoon 23:28]

Ibrahim (Peace be upon him) said,

"All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who gave me Ismaa`eel and Ishaaq in my old age." [Ibrahim 14:39]

Dawood (Peace Be upon him) and Sulayman (Peace Be Upon him) said,

"All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has preferred us above many of His believing servants." [An-Naml (27): 15]

Allah commanded our Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) saying,

"Say: All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has not begotten a son…" [Al-Israa` (17): 111]

The People of Paradise will say,

"All praises and thanks are due to Allah Who has removed from us all grief." [Faatir (35): 34]

"And the close of their supplication will be: All praises and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the Universe." [Yunus (10): 10]

It is for this reason that the word hamd has been employed in this verse of al-Fatihah.

Some of the scholars said that shukr is more encompassing than hamd because praise is expressed by the tongue whereas thanks can be expressed by the tongue, heart and limbs. Thanks with the tongue is done by praising the Bestower of Blessings. Thanks by the limbs is done by acting in obedience to Him and abandoning actions of disobedience. Thanks in the heart is done by recognising the magnitude of the blessing and knowing that it has been given by the grace of Allah and not by the servants own merit.

Both opinions are correct in their own place: hamd is more general with respect to when it is done and shukr is more general with respect to how it is done.

There are a number of ahaadeeth that show us the great virtue of expressing hamd:

1. Muslim reports from Anas bin Maalik that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Indeed Allah is Pleased at His servant when he eats some food and praises Him for it or when he drinks a drink and praises Him for it. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 4/1429 no. 6592]]

Al-Hasan said, "there is no blessing except that [saying] al-Hamdulillaah is better and more virtuous than it."

2. Ibn Maajah reports from Anas bin Maalik that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Allah does not grant a servant a favor for which he says al-Hamdulillaah except that what he offered [of praising] is better and more virtuous than what he took [of the favor]. [Ibn Maajah [no. 3805] and it was declared hasan by al-Albaanee in 'Saheeh ibn Maajah' [no. 3067]]

Al-Bayhaqee commented on this by saying,

This is because the servant does not attain [the station] of praising and thanking Allah except by His tawfeeq. Therefore the greater excellence [of his praising Allah as compared to the initial blessing that Allah bestowed upon him] is by virtue of his being blessed with the [ability to] praise Allah and extol him and this did not exist in the initial blessing. ['Sharh as-Sindee `alaa ibn Maajah' [no. 3795]]

3. Al-Hakeem at-Tirmidhee reports in 'Nawaadir al-Usul' from Anas bin Maalik that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

If the entire world along with its contents were to be in the hand of a man from my nation and then he were to say al-Hamdulillaah, then al-Hamdulillaah would be better than [what his hand contained]. [Footnote Pending]

Al-Qurtobee commented upon this by saying,

In our view the meaning is that he has been given the world, then after this he has been given this statement and utters it. Therefore this statement is better than the world because the world is soon to perish whereas the statement will endure for it is from those righteous deeds that remain. Allah said,

"The righteous deeds that last are better in the Sight of your Lord, for reward and better for resort." [Maryam 19:76]

4. Ibn Maajah reports from ibn Umar that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

A servant from amongst the servants of Allah said. 'O my Lord! To You belongs all praise and thanks as is required due to the magnificence of Your Face and greatness of Your Authority.' This confused the two [recording] Angels and they did not know how to record it. So they ascended to the heaven and said, 'O our Lord! Your servant has said a statement and we do not know how to record it.' Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent asked, despite the fact that He already knows what His servant said, 'what did my servant say?' They reply, 'O Lord! He said: O my Lord! To You belongs all praise and thanks as is required due to the magnificence of Your Face and greatness of Your Authority.' Allah then said to them, 'record it for my servant as he said it, then when He meets Me, I will reward him for it.' [Sunan ibn Maajah [no. 3801]. Albaanee ruled it to be da`eef as in 'Da`eef ibn Maajah' [no. 829]. Al-Busayree said in 'az-Zawaa`id,' "Its

isnaad contains Qudaamah bin Ibraaheem whom ibn Hibbaan mentioned in 'ath-Thiqaat'. It also contains Sadaqah bin Basheer and I have seen no one who disparaged him or authenticated him."]

5. Muslim reports from Abu Musaa al-Ash`aree that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Purity is half of faith. [The statement] al-Hamdulillaah fills the scales and [the statement] SubhaanAllah wal-Hamdulillaah fills what is between the heaven and the earth. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/147 no. 432]]

6. At-Tirmidhee reports from Jaabir bin Abdullaah that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

The most excellent dhikr is [the statement] laa ilaaha illAllah and the most excellent supplication is [the statement] al-Hamdulillaah. [Sunan at-Tirmidhee [no. 3623]. It was declared hasan by Al-Albaanee in 'Saheeh at-Tirmidhee' [no. 2694]]

8. Ahmad reports from Aswad bin Saree` who said,

I asked the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him), "should I not recite to you words of praise that I praised my Lord, the Blessed and Exalted, with?" He replied, "of course! Indeed your Lord loves praise." [Muqbil bin Haadee ruled the isnaad to be munqati` in his 'Takhreej `alaa Tafseer ibn Katheer' [1/47]]

In the verse the word hamd has been preceded by the definite article al, the reason for this is to include all the different manners of praise and specify them to Him, and it is an extolling with which Allah has praised Himself and ordered His servants to praise Him with. This meaning is further expressed in the hadeeth in which the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

O Allah! To You belongs all praise and thanks in its entirety, to you belongs the dominion in its entirety, in Your hand is all goodness in its entirety and to You returns the affair in its entirety. [Ibn Abee ad-Dunya from the hadeeth of Anas. Al-Bayhaqee from the hadeeth of Sa`d bin Abee Waqqaas and Abu Sa`eed al-Khudree]

Therefore by saying al-Hamdulillaah, the servant is praising and thanking Allah Alone due to His greatness, unity, perfection, His Beautiful Names and Attributes and His innumerable favors and blessings that none can encompass save He. It is indeed an amazing statement that encompasses something that volumes would be unable to express and created intellects unable to enumerate! All praise belongs to Allah!

Also there is no mention in this verse as to the adverb denoting when this praise is said (dharf az-zamaan) or from where this praise comes from (dharf al-makaan). However in Surah Rum there is mention that from amongst the 'where's' are the heavens and the earth - in His saying,

'And His is all the praises and thanks in the heavens and the earth.' [Rum (30): 18]

And in Surah Qasas there is mention that from amongst the 'when's' are in this world and in the Hereafter - in His sayings,

'And He is Allah, none has the right to be worshipped besides Him. To Him belongs all praise in the beginning (i.e. this world) and in the end (i.e. the Hereafter).' [Qasas (28): 70]

And He said in the beginning of Surah Saba`a,

'His is all the praise in the Hereafter, and He is the All-Wise, All-Aware.' [Saba`a (34): 1]

Linguistically the word rabb means master, owner or one who sets about correcting and purifying. When used in a possessive or conjunctive (idaafah) structure it can be applied to other than Allah, for example it is said rabb ad-daar or the master of the house, similarly in the Qur'an it is mentioned that Yusuf (AS) said to one of the inmates of prison,

"Mention me in the presence of your master." [Yusuf (12): 42]

Likewise it is mentioned in the famous hadeeth of Jibreel, when the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) listed some of the signs of the Hour,

…When the slave-girl gives birth to her master (rabbatahaa) [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/1 no. 1]]

However the word ar-Rabb can only ever be applied to Allah. It is one of the Names of Allah and means the One Who nurtures and sustains all of His servants through regulating the affairs and granting all types of favors and blessings. More specifically He is the One Who nurtures and sustains his sincere friends by correcting and purifying their hearts, souls and manners. This is why their supplications are frequently made with this Noble Name because they seek this specific nurturing. [As-Sa`dee, 'Tayseer al-Kareem ar-Rahmaan' [pg. 16]]

As-Sa`dee said,

The Lord is the One Who nourishes and sustains the whole of the Creation, meaning everything aside from Allah, by the very fact of His creating them, and His preparing for them all that they need and His favoring them with great blessings which if removed would also remove any possibility of the creation surviving. Therefore every blessing they possess then it is from Him, the Exalted.

His sustaining His creation is of two types: General and Specific. As for the general then it is His creating the Creation and granting them provisions, and guiding them to that which would benefit them in order to have them survive in this world. As for the specific then it is His sustaining His friends with faith and making them conform to it, perfecting and completing it for them, repressing all that would make them turn away from it, bridling any hindering factors that may be set up between them and Him, and safe-guarding them from all evil. It is possible that the reason behind the fact that most of the supplications made by the Prophets employed the word 'Lord' was due to it carrying this meaning, for indeed all of the things they desired through their supplications fell under His Specific Lordship. [Ibid. [pg. 22]]

There is a great deal of difference concerning the meaning of the word "aalameen". It is the plural of aalam which is itself a plural - it has no singular.

Al-Faraa` and **Abu Ubaydah** said,

Al-Aalam is a term referring to anything that possesses an intellect and these fall into four categories: Mankind, Jinn, Angels and Satans. The term aalam does not refer to the animal kingdom because this plural refers to those who possess an intellect specifically.

It is also said that it refers to every race or species of creation and to each generation of that race as stated by Qataadah and at-Tabaree. Therefore mankind is an aalam and likewise every individual race amongst them would be an aalam also, just as each generation of that race would be an aalam. Similarly the Jinn are an aalam etc…

Some of the scholars stated that al-aalam [world, pl. aalameen] is derived from al-allaamah or sign because the existence of the world is a sign, without doubt, of the existence of its Creator who is described with perfect and magnificent Attributes. The Exalted said,

'Indeed in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the change of the night and day are signs (aayaat) for the people of understanding.'

And in the language aayah means allaamah.

However in another place in the Qur'an, Allah Himself has indicated its meaning,

'Pharaoh said: and what is the Lord of the Aalameen? He (Moses) said: the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them.' [Ash-Shu`araa (26): 23-24]

Ibn Abbaas (May Allah be pleased with him) said in explanation to this verse of al-Fatihah,

All praise and thanks are due to Allah, to Whom belongs the creation in its entirety, the heavens and the earth and whosoever is in them and whatsoever is between them – that which is known and unknown.

He also said that al-aalameen refers to everything possessing a soul that walks on the earth.

Qataadah said,

Al-Aalamoon is the plural of aalam and it refers to everything in existence besides Allah

Another essential point that we learn from this latter part of the verse, essential to our understanding of Tawheed, is that the Lord, Blessed and Exalted, is distinct from His creation and not everywhere. [Ibn al-Qayyim, 'Madaarij as-Saalikeen' [1/84]] This is an issue which the Salaf of this nation were unanimously agreed upon and is clearly proven by a multitude of texts from the Book and Sunnah.

Also we learn that that He Alone is the Creator and that all the affairs are under His disposition, just as are all blessings. He is completely Self-Sufficient, and the creation is in total need of Him Alone for everything.

- The saying of the Exalted, **"The Most Beneficent (ar-Rahmaan), The Most Merciful (ar-Raheem)"**:

These are two descriptions of Allah the Exalted and two of the Names from amongst His Beautiful Names derived from ar-Rahma (Mercy) in a way to express intense and exaggerated meanings.

Ar-Rahmaan is more intense than ar-Raheem because Ar-Rahmaan is the one endowed with Mercy that extends to all of the creations in this world and to the believers in the Hereafter. Ar-Raheem on the other hand is the One endowed with Mercy that extends to only the believers on the Day of Judgement - this being the understanding of the majority of the scholars. From the discussion of ibn Jareer [at-Tabaree] one can understand that there is an agreement on this and the commentary of some of the Salaf lends weight to this understanding as was stated by ibn Katheer. The narration reported from Eesa, as

mentioned by ibn Katheer and others, also indicates this - that he (upon him and our Prophet be peace and blessings) said,

Ar-Rahmaan: the One Who shows Mercy in this world and the Hereafter. Ar-Raheem: the One Who shows Mercy in the Hereafter. [Footnote Pending]

Allah the Exalted also points to what we have mentioned when He said,

'Then He rose over the Throne, ar-Rahmaan' [Al-Furqaan (25): 59]

'Ar-Rahmaan rose over the Throne.' [Taa Haa (20): 5]

So he mentioned the Istawaa (Rising over the Throne) with His Name Ar-Rahmaan so as to embrace the whole of His creation with his Mercy as was stated by ibn Katheer. Likewise is His saying,

'Do they not see the birds above them, spreading out their wings and folding them in? None upholds them except ar-Rahmaan' [Al-Mulk (67): 19]

meaning: from his Mercy to His creation is his kindness to the birds and His holding them in the sky while they are spreading out their wings and folding them in. And from the clearest evidences pertaining to this is His saying,

'Ar-Rahmaan. He taught the Qur'an…so which of the favors of your Lord will you two deny?' [Ar-Rahmaan (55): 1-13]

And He said,

'And He is Ever Most Merciful (Raheem) to the believers' [Al-Ahzaab (33): 43]

and hence particularised His name ar-Raheem to them. So if it asked: 'how is it possible to reconcile what you have thus far established with his (Peace and Blessings be upon him) saying in the supplication,

'The Rahmaan of the world and the Hereafter and the Raheem of them'? [Reported by al-Haakim [1/515] and he declared it saheeh. However adh-Dhahabee criticised this by saying, "al-Hakam [its narrator] is not trustworthy and precise." Al-Mundhiree said about this isnaad in 'Targheeb wat Tarheeb' [2/616], "al-Hakm is abandoned, accused." Refer to Muqbil bin Haadee, 'Takhreej `alaa Tafseer ibn Katheer' [1/43]]

The obvious reply - *and Allah knows best* - is that ar-Raheem is specific to the believers as we have mentioned, but it is not specified to them in the Hereafter alone, rather His Mercy to them is included in this world as well. So the meaning of 'the Raheem of them' would be 'His Mercy to the believers in them'. And the evidence that He is Raheem to the believers in this world as well [as the Hereafter] is that this is the literal meaning of His, the Exalted's saying,

'He is the One who sends His Blessings (salaah) upon you, and His Angels so as to lead you out of the darkness to the light, and He is Ever Most Merciful (Raheem) to the believers.' [Al-Ahzaab (33): 43]

Because His salaah upon them, the salaah of His Angels and His leading them out of the darkness to the light is Mercy to them in this world, even though it be the reason for Mercy in the Hereafter as well. And similar to this in meaning is His saying,

'Allah has forgiven the Prophet, the Muhaajiroon and the Ansaar who followed him in the time of distress after the hearts of a group of them had nearly deviated [from the Right Path], but He accepted their repentance. Certainly He is Full of Kindness to them, Most Merciful (Raheem).' [At-Tawbah (9): 117]

For the Mercy is linked to the event that befell the Prophet, the Muhaajiroon and the Ansaar, and also His forgiving them was Mercy in this world even though it be the reason for Mercy in the Hereafter as well. The Knowledge [of what is correct] lies with Allah. [The above discussion is taken entirely from ash-Shanqeetee, 'Adwaa al-Bayaan' [1/31-32]]

In Allah's mentioning His Names, ar-Rahmaan and ar-Raheem, after mentioning 'Lord of the Universe' lies an example of encouragement following admonition such that the servant combines in himself a sense of dread as well as hope. Examples of this method are abundant in the Qur'an and Sunnah. For example His sayings,

"Inform My servants that it is I Who is the Forgiving, the Merciful and that it is My punishment that is the painful torment." [Al-Hijr (15): 49-50]

"The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment, owner of abundance." [Ghaafir (40): 3]

Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) reports that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

If the believers knew of the punishment of Allah then none would hope to attain His Paradise. If the disbelievers knew the full extent of the Mercy of Allah then none would despair of entering His Mercy. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 4/1438 no. 6636]]

- The saying of the Exalted, **"Master of the Day of Judgement"**:

The reciters have two different ways of reciting the first word of this verse, both of which have been reported via continuous (mutawaatir) transmission from the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) as well as Abu Bakr and Umar [As mentioned by at-Tirmidhee]:

1. Reciting it as Malik, or the King.

So the meaning of the verse would be that on that Day, Kingship belongs to Allah Alone and not to any of the creation who before then used to be kings on earth, vying with each other for power and dominion, exulting in what they had, pompously boasting about their grandeur and trying their best to outdo their competitors. However on that day they will come to know with certainty that in reality they are powerless and humiliated and that Grandeur, Power and Authority belongs in its entirety to Him Alone. Allah says,

"That Day when they will all come out, nothing of them will be hidden from Allah. Whose is the kingdom this Day? It belongs to Allah, the One, the Irresistible!" [Ghaafir (40): 16]

2. Reciting it as Maalik, or the Owner.

So the meaning of the verse would be that on that Day, everything would belong to Him and no one else. No one will be able to voice an opinion or enforce a ruling as they used to do on this world. Allah says,

"That Day on which the Spirit and the Angels will stand forth in rows, none shall speak except he whom the Most Beneficent allows and he will speak only that which is correct and true." [An-Naba`a (78): 38]

"All voices will be humbled for the Most Beneficent and nothing shall you hear but the low sound of their footsteps." [Taa Haa (20): 108]

"They cannot intercede except for one with whom He is pleased." [Al-Anbiyaa (21): 28]

Both recitations, of course, carry sound and good meanings however it is possible to argue that the first reading has the most comprehensive meaning as it is not possible to have sovereignty and kingship without possession, whereas there can be ownership without kingship. Similarly it is the king who will enjoin laws upon the owner as to how he should regulate his possession. Allah also says,

"His will be the kingdom on the Day that the trumpet is blown." [Al-An`aam (6): 73]

If it is asked: why did Allah specify his Kingship or Ownership to the Last Day when it is known that these qualities always have and always will apply to Him?

The answer lies in the fact that on that Day, it will become totally and utterly clear to mankind the completeness and perfection of His Kingship, Justice and Wisdom, just as it will become totally clear that the sovereignty of the creation has been severed to the extent that the kings, ministers, the slaves and free-born will all be made the same. All of them yielding to His Greatness, rendered in complete submission to His Magnificence, expectant of His recompense, hoping for His reward and fearing His punishment. This is why His Kingship was fortified by mentioning it in this context, otherwise He is Master of the Day of Judgement and all other days.

Al-Qurtobee and ash-Shawkaanee both stated that with respect to Allah, Malik is an Attribute of the Essence whereas Maalik is an Attribute of Action.

The word "yawm" refers to a period of time. In common usage it refers to the time between the onset of dawn and sunset. It can also refer to a particular portion of time or hour in a day as in His saying,

"This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed my favor upon you and chosen for you Islam as your religion." [Al-Maa'idah 5:3]

It can also refer to periods of time greater than one day as in His sayings,

"He arranges each matter from the heaven to the earth; then it will ascend to Him in a Day the extent of which is a thousand years of those which you count." [As-Sajdah 32:5]

"The Angels and the Spirit ascend to Him during a day the extent of which is fifty thousand years." [al-Ma`aarij 70:4]

The word "deen" here means reckoning or recompense and it is in this sense that the word is employed in His saying,

"On that Day Allah will pay them their deen in truth." [An-Nur (24): 25]

meaning: the recompense of their actions with complete justice. Allah also said,

"Then when we have died and become dust and bones, we will indeed be recompensed." [As-Saaffaat 37:53]

Ibn Abbaas said in explanation to the words yawmid deen,

The Day on which the creations are judged – the Day of Resurrection. He will recompense them for their actions, if they were good then it will be good, if they were bad then it will be bad except for that which He Forgives for indeed the only order [on that Day] will be His order,

"Unquestionably to Him belongs the creation and the Command." [Al-A`raaf (7): 54]

There is no further explanation in this verse of al-Fatihah as to what the Day of Deen is, but this is explained in His saying,

"And what will make you comprehend what the Day of Deen is? Again what will make you comprehend what the Day of Deen is? It is the Day when no person shall have power [to do] anything for another." [Al-Mutaffifeen (83): 17-19]

It is important to note that it is unlawful to call anyone by the name of al-Maalik or al-Malik. Bukhaaree and Muslim report from Abu Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

On the Day of Resurrection Allah will hold the earth and fold the heaven with His Right Hand. Then He will say: I am the King, where are the kings [who reigned] on the earth? [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 9/355 no. 479], Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 4/1462 no. 6703]]

Bukhaaree also reports from Abu Hurayrah that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Indeed the most disloyal and treacherous name in the Sight of Allah is that of a person named the king of Kings (malikul amlaak).

Muslim adds in his report,

For there is no Maalik except for Allah, the Mighty and Magnificent. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 8/144 no.'s 224, 225], Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 3/1171 no. 5339]]

Ahmad reports that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

The person towards whom Allah displays the most Wrath, and the most despicable on the Day of Resurrection is one who was named king of kings (malikul amlaak) for there is no Malik except for Allah. [Ahmad [2/315]. It is saheeh as in 'as-Saheehah' [no. 915]]

As for describing someone as Malik or Maalik then this is permissible for one who fulfils the requirements of the description. In this sense is His saying,

"Indeed Allah has sent you Saul as a king." [Al-Baqarah (2): 247]

"Moses said to his people: O my people! Remember the favor of Allah upon you when He appointed amongst you prophets and made you kings." [Al-Maa`idah (5): 20]

In this verse following the verse concerning the Mercy of Allah lies a reminder that Allah is also the Judge. Therefore not only should we love Him for His nourishing and sustaining us and for His compassion and mercy to us but we should also hold Him in awe knowing that our ultimate happiness or misery rests with Him Alone.

- The saying of the Exalted, **"You Alone we worship"**:

This verse points to the actualization of the meaning of Laa ilaaha illaa Allah (there is none worthy of worship except for Allah) for its meaning is comprised of two matters: negation and affirmation. So the negation aspect, contained in the words laa ilaaha, means to remove every single object of worship apart from Allah in all the actions of worship. The affirmation aspect, contained in the words illaa Allah, means to single out the Lord of the heavens and the earth Alone for all matters of worship in the way that has been legislated by the Sharee`ah.

This negation in the laa ilaaha illaa Allah was indicated by placing the object of worship first in the verse such that it reads "You Alone…" It is established in the rules of the Arabic language that placing the object first in a sentence is one of the ways of confining the meaning of the verb to the object alone.

The affirmation part of the kalima was indicated in His saying, **'we worship'**.

Allah, the Exalted, has explained this meaning which is indicated here in detail elsewhere. For example His saying,

'O Mankind! Worship your Lord who created you.' [Al-Baqarah (2): 21]

Clarifying the affirmation aspect with his words, 'worship your Lord' and the negation aspect at the end of this noble verse with His words,

'So do not set up rivals with Allah while you know.' [Al-Baqarah (2): 22]

And for example His saying,

'We have indeed sent a Messenger to every people saying: worship Allah and leave all that is worshipped besides Him' [An-Nahl (16): 36]

Clarifying the affirmation with His words, 'worship Allah' and the negation with His words, 'and leave all that is worshipped besides Allah'. And for example His saying,

'And whosoever rejects all that is worshipped besides Allah and believes in Allah has held onto the most trustworthy handhold' [Al-Baqarah (2): 256]

Clarifying the negation with his words, 'whosoever rejects all that is worshipped besides Allah' and the affirmation with His words, 'and believes in Allah'. And for example His sayings,

'And when Abraham said to his father and his people: Indeed I am free of what you worship except He who created me' [Az-Zukhruf (43): 26-27]

'And We did not send a Messenger before you except that We revealed to him: that there is none worthy of worship but Me, so worship Me' [Al-Anbiyaa (21): 25]

'Ask those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you: Did We ever appoint gods to be worshipped besides Allah' [Az-Zukhruf (43): 45]

Linguistically ibaadah is derived from abada which means to be subservient and to subjugate. In Islam, the word ibaadah, or worship is a comprehensive term referring to everything, inward and outward that Allah Loves and is Pleased with. [Ibn Taymiyyah, 'al-Ubudiyyah' [pg. 1]] Its pillars are love, hope, fear, submission and humility.

Worship can only be considered to be true worship when the way of performing it is taken from the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) seeking only the Face of Allah. So these two conditions have to be present for the action to be considered worship and hence acceptable to Allah.

These two conditions are proven by the hadeeth reported by Bukhaaree and Muslim from Umar bin al-Khattaab that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Verily actions are by intentions, and for every person is what he intended. So the one whose hijrah was to Allah and His Messenger, then his hijrah was to Allah and His Messenger. And the one whose hijrah was for the world to gain from it, or a woman to marry her, then his hijrah was to what he made hijrah for. [Saheeh Bukhaaree [Eng. Trans. 1/1 no. 1], Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 3/1056 no. 4692]]

And by the hadeeth reported in Saheeh Muslim from Aishah that the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Whosoever does an action that we have not commanded then it must be rejected. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 3/931 no. 4266]]

Allah says,

'[He] Who created death and life that he may test which of you is best in action.' [Al-Mulk 67:2]

Fudayl bin Ayaadh commented on this by saying,

Who is sincere in [his action] and correct in it. The action, if it is sincere but not correct then it is not accepted. If it is correct but not sincere then it is not accepted. It is only accepted when it is both sincere and correct. It is sincere when it is for the sake of Allah and correct when it is done according to the Sunnah. [Ibn Rajab, 'Jaami` al-Uloom wal Hikam' [1/29]]

The proof of what Fudayl said lies in the verse,

"So whosoever hopes for the meeting with His Lord, let him work righteousness and associate none as a partner in the worship of His Lord." [Al-Kahf (18): 110]

It is in this respect that Imam Ahmad said that the foundation of the religion is built upon three ahaadeeth:

1. "Verily actions are by intention."
2. "Whosoever introduces into this affair of ours that which is not part of it then it is rejected."
3. "The halaal is clear and the haraam is clear."

For the whole religion is based upon doing the commanded actions and staying away from the forbidden actions and stopping at the doubtful matters as is contained in the hadeeth of Nu`maan bin Basheer. Fulfilling two matters perfects all of this:

1. That outwardly the action be done as taught by the Sunnah, and this is to be found in the hadeeth of A'ishah, "whosoever introduces into this affair of ours that which is not part of it then it is rejected."
2. That inwardly the action be done seeking the Face of Allah, as is contained in the hadeeth, "verily actions are by intention." [Ibn Rajab, 'Jaami al-Ulum wal Hikam' [1/29]]

- The saying of the Exalted, **'You Alone we ask for help'**:

Meaning that we do not seek aid from anyone but You because the affair in its totality is under Your control Alone, no one else has even an atoms weight of control over it. Again the object of the verb has been brought before the verb to stress this fact. In this statement's following His saying, **'You Alone we worship'** lies an indication that it is not permissible to put our trust in anyone except the One Who deserves worship because no one else has control over the affairs. This meaning which is indicated here is clearly explained in other verses, like His sayings,

'So worship Him and put your trust in Him' [Yusuf 12:123]

'But if they turn away, say: Allah is sufficient for me, none has the right to be worshipped but Him, in Him I put my trust' [Tawbah 9:129]

'The Lord of the East and the West, none deserves to be worshipped but Him, so take Him as the Disposer of your affairs' [Al-Muzzammil 73:9]

'Say: He is the Most Beneficent, we have believed in Him and put our trust in Him' [Al-Mulk (67): 29]

The whole of the religion of Islam revolves around these two principles: we do not worship except Allah and we do not put our trust in anyone or anything except Allah. These are the means to everlasting bliss and security from all evils – so there is no path to victory except by establishing these two pillars. It is for this reason that some of the Salaf said,

The secret of the Qur'an lies in al-Fatihah and its secret is the verse, **'You Alone do we worship and You Alone we ask for help.'**

'You Alone do we worship' has been mentioned before **'You Alone do we ask for help'** because worship is the intended goal and the Aid of Allah is the route to attaining that goal, hence the most important thing has been mentioned first. Another reason given is that the wording is by way of mentioning the general before the specific, and to show that attention should be given to His, Exalted is He, Right over the right of His servant.

Know that this verse employs an address in the second person and this is most fitting at such an occasion because when one praises and supplicates to Allah, then He is near and responsive. Allah says,

"When My servants asks you concerning Me then I am close. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me." [Al-Baqarah 2:186]

The previous verses were in the third person as they were informing us about Allah. Another explanation given is that the style of the verses has changed from the third person to second person in order to stimulate and awaken the reciter such that his attention is drawn to the content of the verse.

If it is asked: why does the verse state **'we worship'** when there is only one person reciting it?

The answer lies in the fact that the wise Sharee`ah has legislated many actions of worship to be done in congregation and it has also recommended the servant of Allah to supplicate for his brother Muslims.

Shaykh Saalih bin Ghaanim as-Sadlaan writes while discussing the virtue of congregational prayer, which is quoted here due to its being generally applicable to all congregational actions of worship:

From amongst the lofty qualities of the Islamic Sharee`ah is that it has legislated many actions of worship be done in congregation. The Muslims gather that they may keep in contact with each other, come to know each other, seek advice from one another, seek help in removing any difficulties that they may be in and discuss various issues with each other. This contains great benefit and many desirable points which cannot be enumerated such as teaching the ignorant, helping the needy, softening the hearts and manifesting the greatness of Islam. The Heavenly Revelation endorses this understanding for when it prohibits and commands it does not direct this prohibition to any specific individual but to the congregation as a whole. Allah says,

"O you who believe! Bow, prostrate and worship your Lord. Perform the good so that you may be successful and perform Jihad in the way of Allah as it should be done..." [al-Hajj 22:77-78]

When the Muslim stands before Allah, intimately conversing with Him and humbling himself before Him he does not speak as an individual rather he speaks as one part of the whole. He says,

"It is only you we worship and it is only Your Aid we seek." [al-Fatihah 1:5]

He does not say, "it is only You I worship and it is only Your Aid I seek." Then he asks Him from His goodness and guidance but he does not ask for himself only, instead he says,

"Guide us to the Straight Path. The Path of those whom You have guided, not the path of those who have earned Your Anger nor those who have gone astray." [al-Fatihah 1:6-7]

Indeed the congregational prayer is from the greatest of means to removing sectarian differences and racism based upon ones color, race or land. Through the congregational prayer the Muslims attain mutual love, respect and brotherhood. This because the elders become known and are thereby respected, the poor and needy become known and are thereby helped, the scholars become known and are thereby asked, and the ignorant become known and are thereby taught. [Saalih as-Sadlaan, 'Salaatul Jamaa`ah Hukmuhaa wa Ahkaamuhaa' pp. 23-24]

Muslim reports from Abu ad-Dardaa` that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

There is no Muslim who supplicates for his brother in his absence except that the Angels say: the same for you as well. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 4/1429 no. 6588]

Muslim also reports from Abu ad-Dardaa that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

The supplication of a Muslim for his brother in his absence is answered. At his head is the Angel commissioned [for conveying the supplication to Allah], whenever he supplicates for good for his brother the Angel says: and for you is the same. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 4/1429 no. 6590]]

In conclusion, **Abdullaah bin Abbaas** said in explanation to this verse,

O our Lord! It is You Alone that we single out for belief, fear and hope. It Your aid Alone that we seek to obey You and indeed in all of our affairs

- The saying of the Exalted, **"Guide us to the Straight Path"**:

After praising Allah, the servant then proceeds to ask of Him from His bounty and blessings. This is the most virtuous way of asking Allah by first praising Him and then asking of Him.

Abu Dawood reports from Fudaalah bin Ubaid that

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) heard a man supplicating in prayer. He did not glorify Allah and neither did he invoke blessings on the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him). The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, "he made haste." He then named him and said to him or to those around him, "if any one of you prays, he should commence by glorifying his Lord and praising Him; he should invoke peace and blessings on the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) and thereafter he should supplicate Allah for anything he wishes." [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/390 no. 1476], at-Tirmidhee [no. 3476], an-Nasaa`ee [3/44], Ahmad [6/18] and others with a hasan isnaad. Refer to the notes of F. Zamrali to 'at-Targheeb fee ad-Du`aa' [pg. 11].]

Al-Haafidh ibn al-Qayyim explains the causes that lead to ones supplication being answered in a beautiful way saying:

When the servant combines in his supplication presence of the heart and its being attentive and devoting itself solely to Allah, sincerely asking Him for the desired matter, doing so at one of the six times when the supplication is more likely to answered - these being:

1. The last third of the night.
2. At the time of the adhaan.
3. Between the adhaan and iqaamah.
4. At the ends of the prescribed prayers.
5. From the time the Imaam ascends the pulpit to the time the prayer has finished on the day of Jumu`ah.
6. The last hour after the prayer Asr.

Alongside this the servant appends to this fear and reverence in the heart, beseeching his Lord in a state of humility and submissiveness. He faces the Qiblah and is in a state of purity, he raises his hands to Allah and begins by praising and extolling Him, then he invokes peace and blessings upon Muhammad, His servant and Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him). He precedes mentioning his need by seeking forgiveness from Allah and then he earnestly and sincerely makes his request as one who is needy and impoverished, supplicating to Him out of hope and fear. He seeks the means of getting close to Him by mentioning His Names and Attributes and making the religion sincerely for Him Alone. Before making supplication he gives in charity. If all this is done then this supplication will never be rejected especially if the servant employs the supplications that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) informed us would be accepted or if his supplication includes mention of Allah's Greatest Name. [Ibn al-Qayyim, 'ad-Daa`u wa ad-Dwaa`u' [pp. 13-14]]

The word **hidaayah**, linguistically meaning direction and guidance is used in two senses in the Qur'an.

1. Guidance of clarification and direction, not taking into account whether the person to whom it has been clarified traverses the path of guidance or not.

With this respect is the saying of Allah,

"And as for the Thamud then We guided them but they preferred blindness over guidance." [Fussilaat (41): 17]

Meaning: We made clear to them the True Way upon the tongue of our Prophet Saalih, upon him and our Prophet be peace and blessings, despite the fact that they did not traverse this way as proven by His saying, **"but they preferred blindness over guidance."**

With this respect also is His saying,

"Indeed, We guided him, whether he be grateful or ungrateful." [Al-Insaan (76): 3]

Meaning: We have made clear to him the Way of Good and the Way of Evil as proven by His saying, **"whether he be grateful or ungrateful."**

2. The specific type of guidance which is Allah bestowing His Grace upon the servant by making him conform to the Way of Truth.

With this respect is His sayings,

"They are the ones whom Allah guided, so follow their guidance." [Al-An`aam (6): 90]

"And whosoever Allah Wills to guide, He opens his breast to Islam." [Al-An`aam (6): 125]

When you come to understand this then any difficulties in understanding the following sayings of Allah will also be removed,

"Indeed! You [O Muhammad] cannot guide those you love, but Allah guides whom He Wills." [Al-Qasas (28): 56]

"And indeed you [O Muhammad] are guiding [mankind] to the Straight Path." [Ash-Shuraa (42): 52]

Because the aspect of guidance that has been negated is the specific guidance as this is in the Hands of Allah Alone. As for the aspect of guidance that has been affirmed then it is the general guidance which is to make clear the Way of Truth. And the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) explained this to the extent that it became like a great white plain whose night is like its day. [Referring to the hadeeth, "I have left you upon the great white plain, its night is like its day, none deviates from it except he who is destroyed." Reported by ibn Maajah, al-Haakim and Ahmad from the hadeeth of Arbaadh bin Saariyah (May Allah be pleased with him). Refer to 'Silsilah Ahaadeeth as-Saheehah' [2/528 no.937] for detailed documentation.]

There is also a third sense to the word guidance that was mentioned by ibn al-Qayyim, and that is guidance on the Day of Judgement to the path to Paradise – this being the bridge leading to it. So the one who is guided in this life to the Straight Path will be guided to the straight path in the Hereafter that leads to His Paradise. His firmness on the path that Day will be dependant on how firmly he trod the Straight Path in this life. [Ibn al-Qayyim, 'Madaarij as-Saalikeen' [1/16]]

"The Straight Path" is the path that the one journeying to Allah traverses and it is none other than obedience to Allah and His Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him). The Salaf have described the Straight Path in various ways but all of their definitions revolve around this basic fact:

1. The Book of Allah as stated by Alee bin Abee Taalib and others.
2. Islam as stated by ibn Abbaas, ibn Mas`ud, ad-Dahhaak and others.
3. The Religion of Allah other than which He will not accept as stated by ibn al-Hanafiyyah
4. The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) and the two Khaleefs who followed him as stated by Abu al-Aaliyah and Hasan al-Basree.
5. The truth as stated by Mujaahid.

All of these opinions are correct. So whosoever follows Islam has followed the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) and the two Khaleefs after him, i.e. Abu Bakr and Umar. Whosoever has followed them has followed the Truth and whosoever has followed the truth has followed the Qur'an and whosoever has followed the Qur'an has obeyed Allah.

At-Tirmidhee reports from Nawaas bin Sam`aan that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Allah has set forth the following as a parable: There is a road that leads straight to the destination. On either side of the road there is a wall in which there are open doors with curtains hanging on them. From the remote end of the road, a voice calls, 'proceed straight and do not turn aside.' Whenever someone intends to lift a curtain from the door another voice calls from above, 'beware! Do not lift the curtain, otherwise you will be lured inside.'

The Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) explained the parable by saying that the straight path is Islam, the walls are the limits imposed by Allah, the open doors are the things that he has prohibited, the voice which calls from the end of the road is the Qur'an and the voice which calls from above is Allah's monitor in the heart of every believer. [At-Tirmidhee [Adaab, no. 76], Ahmad [4/182-183]. It was declared saheeh by al-Albaanee in 'Saheeh al-Jaami`' [no. 3887]]

From the above verse we also learn that the Straight Path is one path and not many and indeed that anything that deviates from it is to be regarded as misguidance.

Ash-Shaatibee explains this further by saying:

"And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not [other] paths, for they will separate you away from His Path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious." [Al-An`aam (6): 153]

The Straight Path is the path to which Allah has named and that is the Sunnah. The other paths are the paths of the people of disagreement who deviate from the Straight Path, and they are the People of Innovation. The intended meaning here is not the 'paths of disobedience' because no one makes disobedience a path that he continuously treads upon - in imitation of and resemblance to the legislation, but rather this description is specifically for the newly invented innovations.

In what Ismail has narrated from Sulaimaan bin Harb lies evidence for this: Hammaad bin Zaid narrated to us; from `Aasim bin Bahdalah; from Abu Waa`il; from Abdullaah [Ibn Abbaas] who said:

'One Day the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) drew for us a long, straight line' and then Sulaimaan drew for us a long, straight line, 'and then he drew lines to its right and to its left and then said, 'this is the Path of Allah.' Then he drew lines to its right and to its left and said, 'these are different paths, upon each of these ways is a devil calling to it', and then he recited the verse*:*

"And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not [other] paths…" [Al-An`aam (6): 153]

meaning these paths

"…for they will separate you away from His Path." [Al-An`aam (6): 153]'

Bikr bin `Alaa said, "he meant the devils amongst men and these [other paths] are the innovations and Allah knows best."

And the hadeeth has been reported in many ways.

Umar bin Salamah al-Hamdaanee said, "we were sitting in the circle of Ibn Mas`ood in the Mosque, which had been plain land after it had been covered with gravel."

Ubaydullaah bin Umar ibn al-Khattaab, who had just returned from an expedition asked him, 'what is the Straight Path O Abu Abdur-Rahmaan?' He replied, 'by the Lord of the Ka`bah, it is that which your father was firmly established upon until he entered Paradise' and he swore firmly upon that three times.

Then he drew a line in the ground with his hand and also drew lines to either side of it and said, 'your Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) left you upon this end and its other end is in Paradise. So whoever remains steadily upon it will enter Paradise and whoever takes any of these lines will be destroyed.'"

In another narration [the wording is], "O Abu Abdur-Rahmaan, what is the straight path?" He replied, "the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) left us upon the nearest end of the line and its other end is in Paradise. And to its left and right are roads in which there are men who invite those who pass by them, saying, 'Come this way! Come this way!' So whoever is taken by them to those paths will end up in Hellfire and whoever remains steadfast upon the great path will end up, through it, in Paradise."

Then **ibn Mas`ood** recited:

"And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not [other] paths, for they will separate you away from His Path. This He has ordained for you that you may become pious." [Al-An`aam (6): 153]

Mujaahid said about the saying of Allah:

"…and follow not [other] paths." [Al-An`aam (6): 153]

[That it refers to] "the innovations and doubts."

Abdur-Rahmaan bin Mahdee said, "Maalik bin Anas had been asked about the Sunnah to which he replied, 'it is whatever has no other name for it except 'the Sunnah' and he recited,

'And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it, and follow not [other] paths, for they will separate you away from His Path.' [Al-An`aam (6): 153]"

**Bikr bin `Alaa** said, "he means - if Allah wills - the hadeeth of Ibn Mas`ood that the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) drew a line..." and he mentioned the hadeeth.

And this explanation shows that the verse includes **all** the different paths of innovation and does not specify one innovation over others. Also amongst the verses [that are related to the censure of innovation] is the saying of Allah the Exalted,

"And upon Allah is the responsibility to explain the Straight Path but there are ways that turn aside. And had He willed, He would have guided you all." [An-Nahl (16): 9]

The explained path is the Path of Truth and that which is other than it, turns away from the truth - and these are the paths of innovations and misguidance - may Allah protect us, by His Excellence, from traveling upon them. It is sufficient for whatever turns away [from the Truth] that it is warned against and the verse contains a warning and a prohibition [of taking other paths that deviate from the Truth].

Ibn Waddaah mentioned that "Aasim bin Bahdalah was questioned: 'O Abu Bakr, have you considered the saying of Allah, the Exalted,

"And upon Allah is the responsibility to explain the Straight Path but there are ways that turn aside. And had He willed, He would have guided you all." [An-Nahl (16): 9]?'

He replied, 'Abu Waa`il informed us; from Abdullaah Ibn Mas`ood saying, "Abdullaah bin Mas`ood drew a straight line and drew lines to its right and to its left and then said, 'the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) drew just like this. He said about the straight line, 'this is the path of Allah' and about the lines to its right and left he said, 'these are different ways, upon each of these ways is a devil calling to it.' Allah the Exalted said,

"And verily, this is my Straight Path, so follow it…" [Al-An`aam (6): 153]

to the end of the verse.'"

At-Tustaree said, "explanation of the path - that is the path of the Sunnah; 'ways that turn aside' - meaning to the Hellfire and they are the sects and innovations."

Mujaahid said, "explanation of the path - meaning the one who is justly balanced between exaggeration and negligence," and this shows that the one who turns aside is one who commits excesses or is negligent, and both of them are amongst the descriptions of the innovations."

From Ali (May Allah be pleased with him), that he used to read it the verse, 'Wa minkum jaa`ir…' (and amongst you is one that turns aside). They said: "He means by that [from] this nation."

So it is as if this verse along with the one before it have come with the same meaning. [Ash-Shaatibee, 'al-I`tisaam' [1/40-45] translation by br. Abu Iyaadh and modified.]

If it is asked why is one supplicating for guidance to the Straight Path when a Muslim is already regarded to be on the Straight Path?

Shaykh al-Islam ibn Taymiyyah says (in response),

The case mentioned above is similar to what some of them ask concerning His saying, **"guide us to the Straight Path"** [Al-Fatihah 1:6] saying: 'Allah has already guided the believer, so what benefit is there in seeking guidance?' Then some of them reply by saying that the meaning is 'keep us firm upon guidance' as the Arab would say to the one who is asleep, 'sleep until I come to you'. Others from amongst them say that the meaning is, 'keep our hearts firm upon the guidance' and that the request for firmness has been omitted. Yet others from amongst them say that it means, 'increase me in guidance.'

This question really occurs due to the absence of their contemplating upon the Straight Path to which the servant seeks guidance to, for the meaning [of the verse] is [seeking guidance to] act according to what Allah ordered, and leave what He forbade in all matters.

This is because the person, even if he has believed that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and that the Qur'an is the truth in a general way, is commonly in need of knowledge of that which would benefit him and harm him. He is in need of knowledge concerning what he has been commanded to do and forbidden from doing in the finer aspects of the matters and in those areas of which he has no knowledge. [Not only this but we find that] that which he does have knowledge of, he does not put the greater part of it to practice! Assuming that all of the commands and prohibitions contained in the Qur'an and Sunnah have reached him, then the Qur'an and Sunnah contain laws that are general and universal for which it is not possible to specify to every individual person - therefore the person has been commanded due to the likes of this to ask for guidance to the Straight Path.

Guidance to the Straight Path includes all of the following matters: cognizance of what the Messenger (Peace and Blessings be upon him) came with in detail, cognizance of what comes under his general orders and concern for acting according to ones knowledge, for indeed just having knowledge is not a cause for attaining guidance if one does not act according to his knowledge. This is why He said to His Prophet after the treaty of Hudaybiyyah,

"Indeed We have given you a manifest victory. That Allah may forgive you your sins of the past and future, complete His Favor upon you, and guide you on a Straight Path." [Fath 48:1-2]

And He said with respect to Moses and Haroon, **"and We gave them the clear Scripture, and guided them to the Right Path"** [As-Saaffaat 37:117-118]

The Muslims have differed as to what Allah Willed from the textual matters - matters of knowledge, belief and action while all of them are agreed that Muhammad is the truth and the Qur'an is the truth. If all of them were to have attained guidance to the Straight Path in totality then they would never have differed. Furthermore the majority of those who know what Allah has ordered disobey Him and do not follow His Way. If they were guided to the Straight Path in these matters then they certainly would have performed what they had been commanded to do, and left what they had been forbidden from. As for those whom Allah guided from amongst this nation until they became from the God-Fearing Friends of Allah, then the greatest reason for this was their supplicating to Allah with this supplication (guide us to the Straight Path) in every prayer along with the knowledge of their continuous need of Allah that He guide them on the Straight Path. So due to their continually saying this supplication and their acknowledging their continuous need of Him they became God-Fearing Friends of Allah. Sahl bin Abdullaah at-Tustoree said, 'there is not route between a servant and Allah closer to Him then need.'

The one who has attained guidance in the past is in need of guidance in the future, this is the real meaning behind the saying of those who say that it means: 'establish us and guide us to being firm upon the Straight Path.' The opinion of those who say that it means: 'increase us in guidance' includes what has preceded. But all that has been stated refers to His guidance to the Straight Path that is to be granted in the future, for indeed action in the future is upon knowledge that is not yet attained. And the person is not considered to be one who is guided until he acts according to his knowledge in the future, but it is possible that this knowledge not be there in the future, rather it could be removed from the heart, and if it still be there it is also possible that it not be acted upon. Therefore all of mankind is in dire need of this supplication, this is why Allah made it obligatory upon them in every prayer and they are not in need of any other supplication as they are of this one. When guidance is obtained to the Straight Path then help, provision and all of the happiness that the soul seeks are obtained [from Allah]. Allah knows best. [Ibn Taymiyyah, 'Diseases of the Heart and their Cures' [Eng. Trans., pp. 44-47]. The original text is to be found in his 'Majmoo Fataawaa' [10/ 91-138]

Allah commands His servants to supplicate,

"Our Lord! Let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us mercy from Yourself. Indeed You are the Bestower." [Aali Imraan (3): 8]

- The saying of the Exalted, **"The Path of those whom You have favored"**:

After the servant has requested for guidance to the Straight Path, Allah then proceeds to clarify further what this Straight Path is, and this in turn is explained in greater detail in Surah an-Nisaa,

"But no by Your Lord! They cannot have faith until they make you [O Muhammad] judge in all disputes between them and find in themselves no resistance to your decisions, and accept them with full submission. And if We had ordered them [saying]: 'kill [the guilty ones amongst] yourselves or leave your homes' very few of them would have done it. If they had done what they were told, it would have been better for them and would have strengthened their [faith]. And indeed we would then have bestowed upon them a great reward from Ourselves. And indeed we would have guided them to a Straight Way. And whosoever obeys Allah and the Messenger then they will be in the company of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His favor: the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. What an excellent company these are!" [An-Nisaa` (4): 65-69]

Ibn Abbaas said in commentary to this verse,

[Those who you have favored] by making them obedient to You and worship You from the Angels, the Prophets, the sincerely truthful, the martyrs and the righteous. This is like what our Lord, the Exalted has said, **"they will be in the company of those upon whom Allah has bestowed His favor: …"**

Ash-Shanqeetee makes the following additional observations concerning this verse:

1. The correctness of the khaleefate of Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq (May Allah be pleased with him) can be derived from this noble verse.

This is because he is included amongst those whom Allah has commanded us, in the Great Qur'an and the Seven Oft-Repeated Verses - I mean al-Fatihah, to ask Him that He guide us to their path thus indicating that their path is the Straight Path.

This lies in His saying, 'guide us to the Straight Path, the Path of those whom You have favored' and He explained who these favored people were and included amongst them the Siddeeqeen. [The Messenger

(Peace and Blessings be upon him)] explained that Abu Bakr (May Allah be pleased with him)was from amongst the Siddeeqeen, so it becomes clear that he is included amongst those whom Allah has favored - those whom Allah has commanded us to ask Him to guide us to their path. Therefore there remains no doubt that Abu Bakr as-Siddeeq was upon the Straight Path and that his khilaafate was correct.

2. You have come to know that the Siddeeqeen are from those whom Allah has favored. And Allah has made clear that Maryam the daughter of Imraan was a Siddeeqa in His saying, **'and His mother was a Siddeeqa'** [Al-Maa`idah (5): 75]. So is Maryam included in His saying, 'those whom you have favored' or not?

The answer: whether or not she is included amongst them is dependent upon a foundational principle that has a well-known dispute over it. This is: does the sound masculine plural and its likes that occur in the Qur'an and the Sunnah include the feminine gender in all cases or only in those cases for which there is specific evidence?

A group of scholars took to the opinion that it does - so according to them Maryam is included in the above verse. And these scholars depended upon two proofs:

1. The consensus of the people of the Arabic Language that the masculine gender takes prevalence over the feminine. [For example a mixed gathering of males and females would be referred to by using the male plural not the female plural even if their be more females than males.]
2. There a number of verses which prove that the females are included in the sound masculine plural, like His saying concerning Maryam herself,

'She testified to the truth of the Words of her Lord and His Books, and she was of those obedient to Allah. [Qaaniteen - a sound masculine plural]**'** [At-Tahreem (66): 12]

And His saying concerning the wife of al-Azeez,

'O Yusuf! Turn away from this! [O Woman!] Ask forgiveness for your sin, indeed your were of the sinful. [Khaati`een - a sound masculine plural]**'** [Yusuf (12): 29]

And His saying concerning Bilqees,

'And that which she used to worship besides Allah has prevented her [from Islam], for she was of a disbelieving people. [Qawmin Kaafireen]**'** [An-Naml (27): 43]

And His saying,

'We said: get down [ihbitoo] **all of you from this'** [Al-Baqarah (2): 38]

and this address includes Hawaa by consensus.

The majority of scholars, however, took to the opinion that the females are not included in the sound masculine plural unless there is specific evidence. They depended upon a number of verses like His sayings,

'Indeed the male Muslims and the female Muslims, the male believers and the female believers…Allah has prepared for them a forgiveness and a great reward.' [Al-Ahzaab (33): 35]

'Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts. That is purer for them' [An-Nur (24): 30]

following this with,

'And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and protect their private parts' [An-Nur (24): 31]

So their following the mention of the men indicates that they are not included amongst them.

They replied to the proponents of the first opinion by saying that the fact that the masculine gender takes prevalence over the feminine is not a matter of dispute. What is disputed is whether the masculine plural includes the females in every case. They further replied to the verses [used by the first group] by saying that it is known by the context of these verses and the meaning of the wordings that the females are included in the male plural - and that their inclusion in the male plural in the case of their being an evidence that they are included is not contended.

So according to this opinion Maryam is not included in the verse.

- The saying of the Exalted, **"not the path of those who have earned [Your] anger, nor those who have gone astray"**:

Al-Ghadab linguistically means anger, it is the opposite of pleasure (ridaa) and one of the Attributes of Allah. Maghdoob refer to the objects of Anger.

Dalaal linguistically means to divert from the intended goal or to diverge from the true path and it is the opposite of guidance. It is also said 'the milk dalla in the water' when it is mixed such that it disappears. In this respect also is His saying,

"And they say: when we become dalal in the earth." [As-Sajdah (32): 10]

Meaning when we die and disappear into the earth by becoming dust. Ad-Daalleen refers to those who gone astray.

* * *

At-Tirmidhee reports from **Adee bin Haatim** who said,

I asked the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) about Allah's saying about, **'those who have earned [Your] Anger'**, and He said, 'it refers to the Jews.' I then asked about, **'those who have gone astray'** and he said, 'the Christians are those who have gone astray.' [Reported by at-Tirmidhee and Ahmad and it is saheeh]

The Jews and the Christians even though both of them are misguided and both of them have Allah's Anger on them - the Anger is specified to the Jews, even though the Christians share this with them, because the Jews knew the truth and rejected it and deliberately came with falsehood. Therefore the Anger of Allah being upon them was the description most befitting them. The Christians were ignorant, not knowing the truth, so misguidance was the description most befitting them.

This is further proven by the sayings of Allah concerning the Jews,

'So they have drawn on themselves anger upon anger.' [Al-Baqarah (2): 90]

'Say: shall I inform you of something worse than that, regarding the recompense from Allah: those (Jews) who incurred the Curse of Allah and His Anger.' [Al-Maa`idah (5): 60]

'Indeed those who took the calf (for worship), anger from their Lord and humiliation will come upon them.' [Al-A`raaf (7): 152]

And Allah said concerning the Christians,

'And do not follow the vain desires of people (i.e. the Christians) who went astray in times gone by, and misled many, and have themselves strayed from the Straight Path' [Al-Maa`idah (5): 77]

Other opinions have been voiced concerning the meaning of this verse, but the meaning mentioned above takes precedence and is undoubtedly correct as it has been reported from the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) himself.

It is important to note that in this verse when the blessings of Allah have been mentioned they have been mentioned in the second person such that Allah is directly referred to, **'the path of those whom You have favored.'** However when the Anger or punishment of Allah is mentioned it is mentioned in the third person such that Allah is not directly referred to, **'not the path of those who have earned [Your] Anger, nor of those who have gone astray.'** This even though He is the One in reality Who is Angry with them, and He is the One by Whose decree they were misguided as proven by His sayings,

"Have you not considered those who make allies of a people with whom Allah has become Angry." [Al-Mujaadilah (58): 14]

"Whoever Allah sends astray – there is no guide for him. And He leaves them in their transgression, wandering blindly." [Al-A`raaf (7): 186]

And other verses proving that guidance and misguidance is the sole responsibility of Allah. [For more detail and explanation of decree (qadr) refer to the book 'Fate in Islam' by Dr. Saaleh as-Saaleh]

This is a method that is used throughout the Qur'an and it is a way of showing respect to Allah and not attributing evil to Him as well as showing how belittled such people are. This was clearly expressed in the supplication of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) when he said,

"I am completely at Your service and doing all I can to please You. All good is in Your Hands and evil does not pertain to You." [Reported by Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/373 no. 1695], Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/195 no. 759] and an-Nasaa`ee [2/130]]

Ibn al-Qayyim explains this hadeeth and this concept further,

The meaning of this hadeeth is far greater and wider then the [explanations presented by some saying that it means], "evil does not come close to you" or "evil [deeds] are not raised to you." This is because these explanations only serve to absolve Him of any evil coming close to Him or evil [deeds] being raised to him, however they do not explicitly absolve Him of evil with regards His Essence, Attributes and Actions. This is not the full purport of the words of the Truthful One, the one entrusted and preserved from error for his (Peace and Blessings be upon him) words absolve Him of any evil whatsoever being linked to His Essence, Attributes and Actions. However it is possible that evil be contained in His creation as occurs in His words,

"Say: I take refuge with the Lord of Daybreak. From the evil of what He created." [Al-Falaq 113:1-2]

Contemplate the style of the Qur'an and see how sometimes it adjoins evil to its cause and those who enact it such as His sayings,

"The disbelievers are [truly] the oppressors and wrong-doers." [Al-Baqarah 2:254]

"And Allah does not guide a sinful, rebellious people." [Al-Maa`idah 5:108]

"For the wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them [certain] foods that had previously been lawful for them." [An-Nisaa 4:160]

"That was Our recompense for their transgression." [Al-An`aam 6:146]

"We did no injustice to them, rather it was they who were unjust, wrong-doers." [Az-Zukhruf 43:76]

Sometimes the subject [of the sentence] is omitted as in His sayings,

"And we do not know whether evil is intended for those who are on the earth, or whether their Lord desires guidance for them." [Al-Jinn 72:10]

This verse omits the one who intends the evil but explicitly states the one who intends good. In a similar vein is His saying,

"The path of those whom You have favored, not the path of those who have earned [Your] Anger nor those who have gone astray." [Al-Fatihah 1:7]

Hence He mentioned the favor adjoined to Himself, misguidance adjoined to those who committed it and omitted the enactor of the Anger. Likewise is the saying of Khidr with regards the ship,

"So I wished to cause a defect in it." [Al-Kahf 18:79]

And his saying with regards the orphans,

"So your Lord intended that they reach maturity and then extract their treasure as a mercy from your Lord." [Al-Kahf 18:82]

Likewise is His saying,

"Allah has endeared faith for you and made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, disobedience and sins." [Al-Hujuraat 49:7]

"Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire." [Aali Imraan 3:14]

Omitting the one who made it beautiful for them. [Ibraaheem] Al-Khaleel (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

"It is He Who created me and it is He who guides me. It is he Who feeds me and gives me to drink. When I am ill it is He who cures me. It is He Who will cause me to die and then bring me back to life. I hope that He will forgive me my sin on the Day of Recompense." [Ash-Shu`araa 26:77-82]

So he attributed all aspects of perfection to Him in these actions but attributed to himself any [seeming] deficiency – this being illness and sin.

We have explained this matter in depth in our book, "al-Fawaa`id al-Makkiyyah" and I have explained there the difference between the sayings of Allah,

"Those who have been given the Book." [Al-Baqarah 2:101]

And His sayings,

"Those to whom We have given the Book." [Al-Baqarah 2:121]

Saying that He mentioned Himself explicitly in those contexts in which He praises [the People of the Book] but omits His mention in those places that He censures them. This then, is one of the secrets of the [literary style] of the Qur'an.

Exactly the same applies to His sayings,

"Then We caused to inherit the Scripture those We have chosen of Our servants." [Al-Faatir 35:32]

"Indeed those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are in disquieting doubt concerning it." [Ash-Shura 42:14]

"And there followed them successors who inherited the Scripture while taking unlawful gains and pleasures in this lower life." [Al-A`raaf (7): 169]

Therefore in conclusion only the good, wisdom and benefit is adjoined to Allah, the Exalted, whereas the evil does not pertain to him. [Ibn al-Qayyim, 'Badaa`i al-Fawaa`id' [1/454-455]; 'Tafseer al-Qayyim' [pp. 554-556]

The Saying of "Ameen" After Reciting al-Fatihah

It is recommended for the one who is reciting the Qur'an to say "Ameen" after having recited al-Fatihah and after a short pause upon completing the word 'daalleen' so as to differentiate between that which is the Qur'an and that which is not.

The meaning of "Ameen" in the eyes of the majority is, 'O Allah respond to our supplication.' Maqaatil said that it gives strength to the supplication and is a cause for the descent of blessings.

In Surah Yunus the following supplication of Musa (Peace be upon him) is mentioned,

"Musa said, 'O Lord! You have indeed bestowed splendor and wealth upon Pharaoh and his chiefs in the life of this world, our Lord! That they may lead men astray from Your path. Our Lord! Destroy their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful torment.' Allah said, 'verily the supplication of you both is answered…'." [Yunus (10): 88-89]

In the commentary to this verse it is stated that Musaa was saying the supplication and Haaroon was saying "Ameen" and hence he was considered to be amongst the supplicants. [As stated by Abu al-Aaliyah, Abu Saalih, Ikrimah, Muhammad bin Ka`b and ar-Rabee` bin Anas. Refer to 'Tafseer ibn Katheer' [2/565]]

Al-Hakeem at-Tirmidhee reports in 'Nawaadir al-Usul' from Anas bin Maalik (May Allah be pleased with him) that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

Allah has given my nation three things that were not given to any nation before them: The salaam, which is the greeting of the inhabitants of Paradise; the rows of the Angels; and the Ameen, which was only previously given to Musaa and Haaroon. [Footnote Pending]

Ibn Maajah also reports from 'Aishah (May Allah be pleased with her) that the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said,

"The Jews do not envy you for anything as much as they envy you for saying the Salaam and Ameen" [Sunan ibn Maajah [no. 856] and it is saheeh as in 'Saheeh ibn Maajah' [no. 697]]

Abu Dawood reports from Abu Misbah al-Maqraanee that he said,

We were sitting with Abu Zuhayr an-Numairee who was one of the Companions and his speech used to be the most beautiful speech. Whenever a person from amongst us supplicated he would say, "complete it by saying 'Ameen' for indeed 'Ameen' is like the seal on a scroll."

Abu Zuhayr said, "shall I not inform you about this? We left with the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) one night and we came upon a person who was persistently and actively [supplicating] for something so the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) stood listening to him. Then the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said, 'it will definitely be answered if he completes it.' A man from amongst the people [present] asked, 'with what should he complete it?' He replied, 'by saying 'Ameen' for if he completes it by saying Ameen it will definitely be answered.' So the man who asked turned away and went to the supplicant and said, 'O so-and-so! Complete [your supplication] and rejoice.'" [Sunan Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/239 no. 938]. It is da`eef as in 'Da`eef Abu Dawood' [no. 199]]

With regards to prayer then Muslim reports from Abu Musaa al-Ash`aree (May Allah be pleased with him)that he said,

The Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) addressed us and explained to us our sunnah [that we should follow] and explained to us [the method of performing] our prayer. He said, "When you pray then straighten your rows, then let one of you lead you. When he says the takbeer then say the takbeer, when he says, 'not the path of those who have earned [Your] Anger nor those who have gone astray' then say Ameen and Allah will respond to you." [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/221 no. 800]]

Abu Hurayrah (May Allah be pleased with him) reports from the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) that he said,

"When the Imam says 'Ameen' then say 'Ameen' for indeed the one whose 'Ameen' coincides with the 'Ameen' of the Angels will have his previous [minor] sins forgiven. [Saheeh Muslim [Eng. Trans. 1/225 no. 809]]

So this hadeeth shows that ones previous sins will be forgiven if four conditions are met:

1. The Imam saying Ameen.
2. The Follower saying Ameen.
3. The Angels saying Ameen.
4. The statements coinciding.

Abu Dawood reports from Waa`il bin Hujr (May Allah be pleased with him) that when the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) finished reciting al-Fatihah he would say, "Ameen" loudly, prolonging his voice. [Abu Dawood [Eng. Trans. 1/238 no. 932], Bukhaaree in 'Juz al-Qiraa`ah' with a saheeh isnaad as stated by al-Albaanee in 'The Prophet's Prayer Described' [pg. 24]. Ahmad and at-Tirmidhee report it with the words, 'prolonging his voice.' The hadeeth has also been reported by Ai, ibn Mas`ud and others.]

Surah al-Fatihah is a Cure for the Diseases of the Heart and the Body

The disease of the heart occurs due to two basic matters:

1. The corruption of knowledge
2. The corruption of intent.

These in turn lead to two fatal illnesses: misguidance and anger, misguidance being the end result of the corruption of knowledge and anger being the end result of the corruption of intent. These two illnesses are the lords of all the diseases of the heart.

When one asks for guidance to the Straight Path then he is asking for that which will cure the disease of misguidance. This is why this Surah has been made obligatory upon every servant in every prayer.

Actualizing the verse, **"You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help"** serves as a cure for the corruption of intent. This is because the intent is linked to the objectives and means of attaining them. Therefore this cure is composed of six matters:

1. Worshipping Allah Alone
2. By performing what He commanded and legislated
3. Not by following ones own desires
4. Neither by following the mere opinions of people
5. By asking Allah for His Help to enact this
6. And not relying on oneself

Furthermore the heart is beset with two dangerous and destructive diseases and this verse serves as a cure for them.

Ibn Taymiyyah said,

'You Alone we worship' represses ostentation and **'You Alone we ask for help'** represses arrogance.

As regards its curing the bodily illnesses then this can be seen in the hadeeth of Abu Sa`eed reported in Saheeh Bukhaaree that after he had recited it to cure a person who had been bitten by a scorpion, the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) said to him,

And what made you to know that it was a ruqya? [This discussion is summarized from ibn al-Qayyim, 'Madaarij as-Saalikeen' [1/64-66]]

Surah al-Fatihah Comprises the Meaning of the Entire Qur'an

As alluded to earlier, al-Fatihah is named the Mother of the Qur'an because it succinctly summarizes the whole of the Qur'an. We are now in a position to analyze this statement further.

The Surah includes affirmation of Tawheed in all of its various categories,

1. Tawheed ar-Rububiyyah, meaning unity of Allah's Lordship, contained in His saying, **"Lord of the Universe."**
2. Tawheed al-Uluhiyyah, meaning unity of Allah's worship in that all worship is to be done sincerely for His sake Alone, contained in His saying, **"You Alone we worship and Your aid Alone we seek."**
3. Tawheed al-Asmaa was Sifaat, meaning the unity of Allah's Names and Attributes in that they are perfect and unique to Him, contained in His saying, **"all praise and thanks are due to Allah."**

It teaches us to praise and glorify Allah by mentioning His beautiful and perfect Names and Attributes.

It teaches us about His Mercy and His Justice.

It teaches us about the Day of Judgement and about the recompense of our deeds.

It teaches us that the recompense will be established upon perfect justice.

It encourages one to perform righteous actions and dissuades one from performing sins.

It teaches the servants of Allah to ask of Him Alone, to humble themselves and worship Him Alone and to put their trust and reliance in Him Alone.

It teaches us to ask Allah continuously for guidance to the Straight Path.

It points us towards the nations of the past and warns us against falling into the same acts of transgression and misguidance that they were guilty of.

It teaches us to aspire to the company of the sincerely truthful, the martyrs and the righteous.

It teaches that there is nothing in the Qur'an that would give aid to or encourage innovation. Hence never will the innovator be able to find evidence for his misguidance in the Qur'an.

Mawdudi states:

Al-Fatihah is actually a prayer that Allah teaches to all who embark upon the study of His Book. Its position at the beginning signifies that anyone who wants to benefit from the Book should first offer this prayer to the Lord of the Universe.

Man naturally prays only for what his heart desires and only when he feels that the object of his desire is at the disposal of the One to Whom his prayer is addressed. The placing of this Surah at the head of the Qur'an is a sign that Allah urges man to read this Book with the aim of discovering the right course in life i.e. the Straight Way, to study it with the earnestness of a seeker after Truth, and never to forget that the real source of true knowledge is Allah Himself. The student of the Book should therefore begin by making a humble petition to Him for true guidance.

Once this is grasped, it becomes self-evident that in relation to the Qur'an this opening Surah, al-Fatihah is not just an introduction or foreword; the relationship is really one of prayer and response. Al-Fatihah is a prayer from man, and the rest of the Qur'an is Allah's response to this prayer. Man prays to Allah that He may show him the Straight Way and in response to this prayer Allah offers the Qur'an as the true guidance, the Straight Way which man has sought and prayed for. [Abul A`la Mawdudi, 'Towards Understanding the Qur`an' [pp. 33-34]. I have replaced the word God with Allah in the above quote]

Surah al-Fatihah Comprises a Refutation of Many of the Principle Innovations

From the amazing qualities of al-Fatihah is that we find that despite its few words, it contains a refutation of many principle innovations. This can be seen generally in the statement, 'Guide us to the Straight Path' for the Straight Path refers to the truth and giving this truth preference over ones desires. This truth is embodied in the Sunnah of the Prophet (Peace and Blessings be upon him) and the way of the Companions. Any departure from this way is most definitely misguidance.

Specifically we see that al-Fatihah:

1. Establishes the need for Prophethood

This can be seen from His words, 'Lord of the Universe,' for it does not befit One with such a description that He leave His creation wondering aimlessly, without guidance.

It can also be seen from His words, **'Master of the Day of Judgement,'** for this is the Day on which the servants will be judged for their deeds – punished for their transgressions and rewarded for their obedience. However they are in need of knowing what is obedience and disobedience.

It can also be seen from His saying, **'You Alone we worship,'** for worship consists only of that which Allah Loves and is Pleased with. The servants have no way of knowing this except through the Prophets.

It can also be seen from His words, **'Guide us to the Straight Path,'** for guidance consists of clarification followed by the tawfeeq of enacting it. This requires Prophets.

2. It refutes the proponents of Wahdatul Wajud (Unity of Being)

Those who state that there is no distinction between the created and Creator, that the servant is the Lord, that there is no King and subjects, that there is no worshipper and worshipped etc…

This Surah refutes this heresy from beginning to end in words that are too clear to require further explanation.

3. It refutes the Majus and the Qadariyyah.

Those who, in effect, affirm two lords. Those who state that their actions have no link to the qadr of Allah, that actions are not created and that they arise by the complete free will of the servants. This implies that Allah is not the Lord over their actions and as such the affirmation of Lordship in this Surah refutes them.

In the words, **'Your Aid Alone we seek'** also lies a clear refutation of this heresy, for by saying these words we are seeking aid for performing that which must be under His control and authority.

4. It refutes the Jahmiyyah (those who deny the Attributes of Allah)

This can be seen in our praising Him for praise necessitates the affirmation of everything that He is praised for such as His Perfect Attributes.

Also it affirms the Attribute of Mercy and this further includes affirmation of Attributes that are necessary for this to exist such as Life, Will, Ability/Power, Hearing and Seeing.

It also affirms the Lordship of Allah which in turn necessitates the affirmation of His Actions. Similarly it affirms the Godship of Allah and this necessary necessitates the affirmation of Perfect descriptions both of His Essence as well as Actions.

5. It refutes those who worship others besides Allah

As can be clearly seen in the words, **'You Alone we worship and Your Aid Alone we seek.'**

It can also be seen in the words, **'Guide us to the Straight Path'** for this is the path of those who have actualised Tawheed.

6. It refutes the Jabariyyah (those who say that man is coerced).

This can be seen in our praising Him for this necessitates that He would not punish His servants for that which they have no choice in or something that is beyond their ability.

This can also been understood in the affirmation of His Mercy.

This can also be seen in the affirmation of worship and its attribution to the servants, **'we worship.'**

7. It refutes those who say that the creation is eternal

This can be seen in our praising Him, for this necessarily implies the affirmation of His Actions.

It can also be seen in the affirmation of His Lordship over the Aalam which, as has preceded, is everything besides Allah. Hence the creation is subjugated by a Lord (marboob) and anything that is subjugated must necessarily be created. Something that is created must have come into existence at some time.

It can also be seen in the affirmation of His Tawheed for this necessitates that none of His creation share in any of His specific qualities of Lordship.

8. It refutes the Raafidah (Extreme Shi'ah)

This lies in al-Fatihah dividing mankind into three categories: those who have been favored, those who have earned Anger and those who have been misguided. The first category are those who traverse the Straight Path, who follow the truth and there is no doubt that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah (Peace and Blessings be upon him) fit this description better than the Rawaafidah. It is impossible that the Companions be ignorant of the truth yet the Rawaafidah know it, or that the Companions reject it and they take to it!

Furthermore we see the effects of these two groups showing us who is upon the truth. We see the Companions conquering the lands of the disbelievers and making them the lands of Islam. We see them conquering the hearts by the Qur'an, correct knowledge and guidance. Therefore their effects show that they are upon the Straight Path.

However we see the opposite effects in the Rawaafidah in every time and place, and history is the greatest testimony to this – how they aided the enemies of Islam against the Muslim. How many tragedies amongst the Muslims they were guilty of, how many Mosques were deserted and Qur'anic texts burnt, how many Muslims and their scholars were killed due to them.

It is due to this that the Straight Path has been explained by some to be the way of Abu Bakr and Umar as has preceded. [This whole section is taken from ibn al-Qayyim, 'Madaarij as-Saalikeen' [1/69-84] summarized]

And all praise and thanks are due to Allah, the Lord of the Universe.